Keeping Kids in School

Des Moines mentor program succeeds in dropout prevention. Page 35

JANUARY 2008

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Are soaring student loans scaring off tomorrow's teachers?

SEE IOWA STUDENT TEACHER JENNA MILLER'S STORY ON PAGE 29

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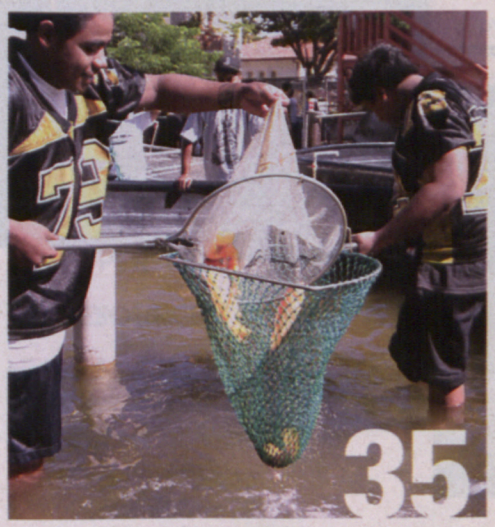
> VOLUME 26 > NUMBER 4 > JANUARY 2008

29 | STUDENT LOANS

My Debt, My Life

COVER STORY Whether 23 or 50, NEA members are struggling under the crushing weight of student loan debt. See how it's hurting them and you—even if your college tuition bills were paid long ago.



24 | NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Is This What Failure Looks Like?

Schools like Patricia Ramirez's in Texas are making great strides to help students, but the law says otherwise.

35 | DROPOUT PREVENTION

Keeping it Real

Programs stressing real-world skills reach students who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

38 | IMMIGRATION

Caught in the Cross fire

When new laws target undocumented immigrants, can their children—and you—be penalized?

42 | TRY THIS!

All Hands on Deck

Learn how to bring volunteers into your classroom and keep them there to lighten the load and motivate students.

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neatoday | departments

> VOLUME 26 > NUMBER 4 > JANUARY 2008

6 | **TALKBACK**

7 | **EDITOR'S NOTE**

9 | **PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT**

11 | **IN YOUR WORDS**
How do you beat the post-holiday blahs?

13 | **UPFRONT**
It's time to speak up to Congress about NCLB.

20 | **LEADING THE WAY**
President Weaver makes the case for changing NCLB.

23 | **ESP**
Members in merged locals find strength in unity.

44 | **BULLETIN BOARD**

47 | **THE GUIDE**
Staying fit and eating right at any age.

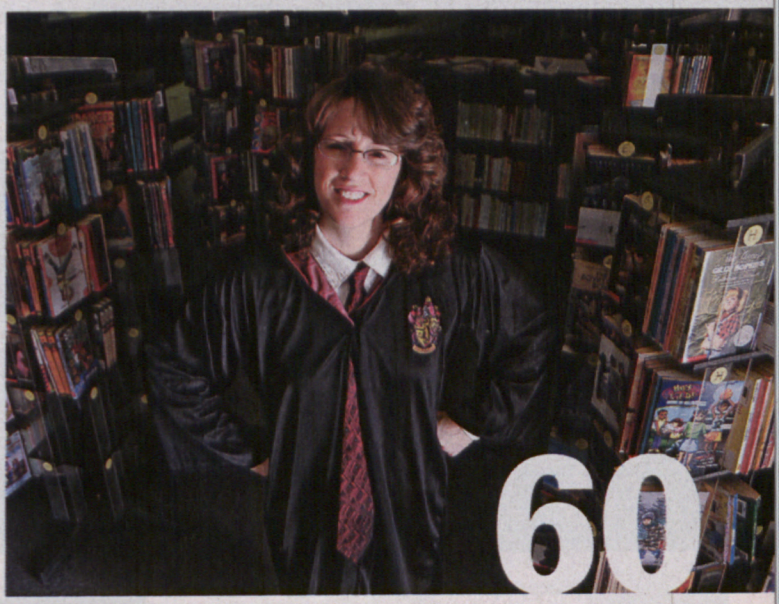
50 | **IN PERSON**

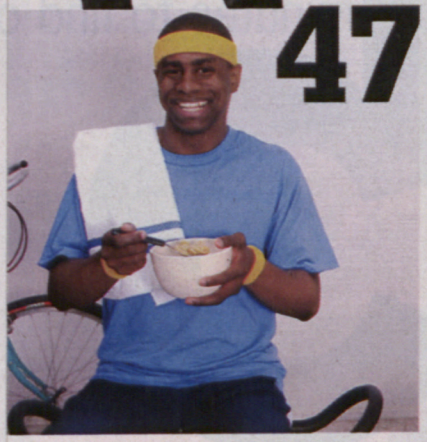
51 | **RESOURCES**

60 | **LAST BELL**
Dumbledore's lesson for teachers (no knowledge of spells required).

57 | EDUCATION MARKET

59 | MARKETPLACE





COVER PHOTO: DANNY PECK; ART DIRECTION: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

PHOTOS PAGE 1:
FROM TOP: DANNY PECK; LEFT: PHILIP SPAULDING III/PHOTOPLANT; RIGHT: ALICIA CALZADA

PHOTOS PAGE 3:
TOP RIGHT: JEFF TOPPING; LEFT: MORGAN LANE PHOTOGRAPHY; MIDDLE RIGHT: PAT CROWE; LEFT: MEIKO ARQUILLOS; BOTTOM: KIM HOLLINGSWORTH

59

is the average retirement age for NEA members.

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> NCLB

READ THE LATEST NEWS ON NCLB REAUTHORIZATION

Last fall, NEA successfully slowed down congressional consideration of a draft to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Law, but the situation could change fast. For updates on NCLB, go to: www.nea.org/ref?nclb

TOP CLICKS

Immigration Fallout

Visit an Oklahoma school caught in the cross fire of controversy surrounding undocumented immigrants. **www.nea.org/ref?immigration**

My Life, My Debt

Young teachers and student members share their stories about how staggering student loan debt is scaring them off of the profession they love. **www.nea.org/ref?debt**

Hidden Treasure

A pioneering alternative high school in Minneapolis educates teen mothers and teaches them how to be better moms—but they'll never pass AYP. **www.nea.org/ref?teenmoms**

WHAT'S NEW ON nea.org

DO THE RIGHT THING!
Promoting thoughtful, respectful behavior at school.
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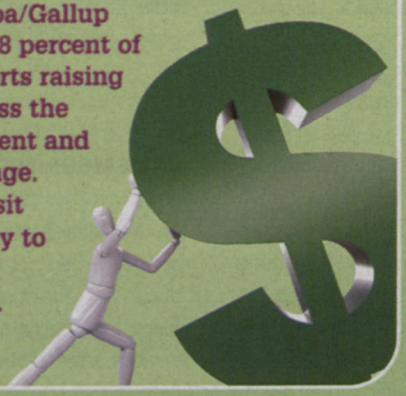
Get the latest on education issues like vouchers, dropout trends, and educators making headlines in our news blog, Ed Notes.
www.nea.org/ref?ednotes

WORKS4ME:
Tips and tricks of the trade from classroom teachers
www.nea.org/ref?works4me

NCLB—IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE:
Commentary on No Child Left Behind
http://nclbchange.wordpress.com

DID YOU KNOW?

A Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll found that 88 percent of the public supports raising salaries to address the teacher recruitment and retention challenge. You can help! Visit www.nea.org/pay to join our national salary campaign.



NOW YOU'RE TALKING

Student Loan Horror Stories

My student loan debt is between $57,000 and 58,000, and I have been paying on it since graduation in 2000. I have only gotten it down approximately $3,000 in almost 7 years of repayment…I could afford a $980 a month mortgage, if it weren't for my school loan.

Homework for Parents?

I believe that homework for parents can possibly motivate parental participation in their child's education. However, I feel that any negative consequence on the child for the parents' failure to participate is unacceptable.

WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD? *Speak out on our discussion forums to debate education issues or share your stories and strategies at* **www.nea.org/forums.**

IMMIGRANTS: ASSOCIATED PRESS, POLL ART: ANDROSOV KONSTANTIN SERGEEVICH, BLOG ART: CHRISTOPHER HALL, HORRIFIED STUDENT: WESTEND61

talk back

Dropout Crisis

I really enjoyed the article about the Pele sisters ("A Tale of Three Sisters," November). I know three young men from Mexico who have a similar story. These students are in the United States with their parents (no green card) and were in my ELL class in eighth grade. They are extremely bright and excel in math. Since August, two of the boys have dropped out of school. Even though our school system has an ELL program, the students (Hispanic, in general) are often alienated from their peers because of the language barrier.

I feel strongly about wanting these young men to succeed, however, with the many regulations and laws, who has a chance? They cannot get a driver's license with no Social Security number (and a number of other things). If the parents or students are stopped by the police with no license, the car is impounded. Congress refused to pass the Dream Bill. How can these bright young students be helped? The potential is there, people care, but politics prevent good things from happening.

BARBARA MURPHY *Huntsville, Alabama*

SERVICE LEARNING FOR FAIR TRADE

I enjoyed reading the article on service learning ("Making the Connection," November), and was pleased to see the reference to Co-op America's National Green Pages ("The Guide to Technology"). December 1 marks our third annual Fair Trade Fair. Our first year we raised $900, last year $1,600, and this year our goal is $2,500. One hundred percent of our proceeds goes to end global poverty; but even more important, our students are gaining valuable lessons on the effects of our shopping habits on the global economy.

DEBBIE AMBRO
Hilliard, Ohio

NEXT TIME...WALK OUT!

The staff at a school in Georgia sat through a last-minute mandatory meeting to pressure them into buying prepaid legal services from the principal's in-laws until 5 p.m. on 9/11 ("Professional Development," November). Why did they sit there? This is a classic example of teachers tolerating abuse by despotic administrators. As long as a group of educated individuals is willing to sit down for what is clearly abuse of power, all teachers suffer. I hope that next time teachers are placed in such a despicable situation they will have the good sense to get up and walk out!

BRENDA TZIPORI
Ventura, California

REMEMBERING WORLD AIDS DAY

Thank you for including World AIDS Day on the Diversity Calendar in the November issue. I do not see it announced many places, so I thank you. My son died of the disease in March of 1994. I am very sensitive to issues related to AIDS and feel there should be more organizations acknowledging the issues like you did.

SCARLETT DUNNAM
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

FULL FUNDING BEFORE GRANTS

Instead of going hat in hand to private sector donors for grants (Try This, November), we ought to be defending and strengthening the public sector and demanding the funding of same. If the money is there for war without end, the money is there for public schools. And until the day when NEA wants to get a lot tougher on that point, they'll find increasing numbers of teachers like me genuinely reluctant to take on yet another task like grant writing to take care of public schools.

MICHAEL HUREAUX
Seattle, Washington

TIME TO GET FIT

Paging through the October issue, I noted the number of photographs of NEA members who may be considered "obese." After a decade of teaching, I too can be included in this category. This year, I have committed myself to a healthier personal and work lifestyle that includes exercise, more mindful eating, and *not* rewarding my students, myself, and my colleagues with food. My efforts have improved my mood, which has positively impacted my classroom and peer relationships.

FRANCINE PARLING
St. Paul, Minnesota

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LET'S TALK

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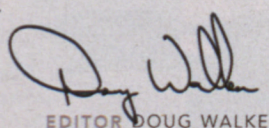
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

My last few New Year's resolutions have been remarkably unremarkable. There've been the obligatory promises to exercise regularly and lose weight, which will be made anew this year, boosted by the tips outlined in the Guide to Staying Fit (page 47). Last year I resolved to be more punctual, but it's hard to make an entrance if you show up on time. Perhaps you'll see the new year as a time to implement that classroom tip you've just not got around to trying. Maybe this halfway point of the school year is a time of recommitment to exemplifying the true spirit of the teaching profession. Unfortunately, some of us contemplating continuing education or paying off student loans face the new year hamstrung. Ballooning tuition rates, student loan costs, and educators' shrinking earning power are adding up to negative numbers and a grim outlook for the profession (see our cover story on page 29). Thanks to the work of activist NEA members, there's some relief in sight, but if public education is to have a happy New Year, we all must resolve to continue fighting for better salaries and affordable higher education.



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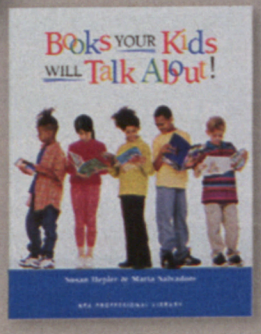

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We, the members of the National Education Association of the United States, are the voice of education professionals. Our work is fundamental to the nation, and we accept the profound trust placed in us.

OUR VISION

Our vision is a great public school for every student.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

OUR CORE VALUES

These principles guide our work and define our mission:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.

A JUST SOCIETY. We believe public education is vital to building respect for the worth, dignity, and equality of every individual in our diverse society.

DEMOCRACY. We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.

PROFESSIONALISM. We believe that the expertise and judgment of education professionals are critical to student success. We maintain the highest professional standards, and we expect the status, compensation, and respect due all professionals.

PARTNERSHIP. We believe partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality public education and student success.

COLLECTIVE ACTION. We believe individuals are strengthened when they work together for the common good. As education professionals, we improve both our professional status and the quality of public education when we unite and advocate collectively.

PAYING BACK...OR GIVING BACK?

Rising college costs put teaching dreams at risk.

When I meet new teachers, they often tell me about the anxiety they feel as they prepare to begin their careers, and their concerns about translating their academic knowledge to a "real world" environment. I can relate to those feelings. They are familiar to anyone who has ever stepped in front of a classroom.

Today, however, many young teachers also face an additional source of worry: crushing debt from student loans.

People have long borrowed money to invest in their education, but something has changed in the past decade. Federal and state governments have reduced support for higher education, causing tuition and fees to soar while student aid lagged far behind. As a result, more students are leaving college with a heavy cloud of debt hanging over their heads.

> "If we want to produce the qualified and motivated teachers our children deserve, we must do a better job of making college affordable for educators."
>
> —Reg Weaver

These clouds cast a heavy shadow over the education profession. Almost one-fourth of all graduates from public universities will owe too much in student loans to repay on a starting teacher's salary. The reality is that those numbers are driving bright minds away from our profession at a time when we need to be attracting them.

We teachers have always made financial sacrifices to do the work we love, but nobody should be forced into unmanageable debt. If we want to produce the qualified and motivated teachers our children deserve, we must do a better job of making college affordable for educators.

The soaring cost of higher education is not only keeping many potential teachers out of the classroom, it is also slamming the door of opportunity in the faces of young Americans who can't find the means to pursue their dreams.

In 2002, more than 400,000 qualified students were unable to attend a four-year school because they couldn't afford it. Over the next decade, the high cost of college will likely prevent millions of high school graduates from continuing their education. This is happening at a time when college is becoming more important than ever.

It's wrong to let our students' dreams be dictated by dollars. So Team NEA is working to make the situation right.

Congress made a good start on college affordability last year by passing a law that increased Pell Grants for low-income students and reduced the amount of interest that can be charged on subsidized student loans. NEA's Student Program helped lead the fight for passage of this bill. Now we must all keep up the pressure on Congress and state legislatures.

College tuition costs must be kept as low as possible. Grants for low-income students must be increased. And private lenders must not be allowed to take advantage of students who are trying to prepare themselves for the future.

Finally, we must look at some of the existing limited programs that offer loan forgiveness for educators, and we must expand those programs or features that work the best.

We must provide a path for motivated and intelligent young people to enter the teaching profession without mortgaging their future. And we must keep the door of opportunity open for every student who is willing to work hard. If we fail to address this challenge, we will be failing our nation's public school students and all they represent for the future.

Reg Weaver

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

PHOTO: PATRICIA MCDONNELL/NEA

Think About It

NEW TECHNOLOGIES CONFIRM: THE BEST WAY TO AVOID AN ACCIDENT IS TO AVOID AN ACCIDENT.

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I stress how grown up [the children] are, and I recognize their maturity as students in the midyear by giving them more responsibility and independence in the classroom. For example, I have shown them a number of ways to work on spelling words during the first semester. In the second semester, I ask students to assess how they learn best and allow them to choose a learning approach on their own. Since the classroom expectations are still the same, children begin to take ownership of their learning without it being micromanaged by me.

MICHELLE WISE CAPEN, *elementary teacher/curriculum coach*
Lenoir, North Carolina

Starting the new calendar year is energizing! We celebrate with a review of what [students have] accomplished so far in the school year and connect it to what they will be doing for the remainder of the school year. In drawing, for example, we start with shapes and learn to add shading and texture to individual objects. After the break, we learn to place objects in a composition, like a still life. I show visuals of what they will be doing, and students always ask, "When do we get started?"

CARL CLAUSEN, *elementary art specialist, Bellevue, Washington*

One great way to reinvigorate students is to be sure you are also reinvigorated and ready to get back to work. I find the best way to beat the blahs after the holidays is to prepare before the holidays arrive. In October and November, I make efforts to schedule vacations for February break, and make skiing and snowshoeing dates with friends for January weekends. When all the hoopla and hullabaloo of November and December are finished, I know I have more excitement on the way. Prevention is the name of my game.

LARCY MANSKER, *physical therapist, Kent School District, Washington*

In January and February when we have a lot of "indoor recesses," I like to organize checkers, chess, and arm wrestling matches. I pair up the kids, draw brackets, and let the fun begin. They love it! I also punch out paper badges they wear to the lunchroom. Kids from years past see them and remember the fun we had. Sometimes I can buy cheap checker/chess sets at Dollar Tree for the champs. Some years, the principals challenge the champs.

CATHE KAS, *third-grade teacher, Frankfort, Indiana*

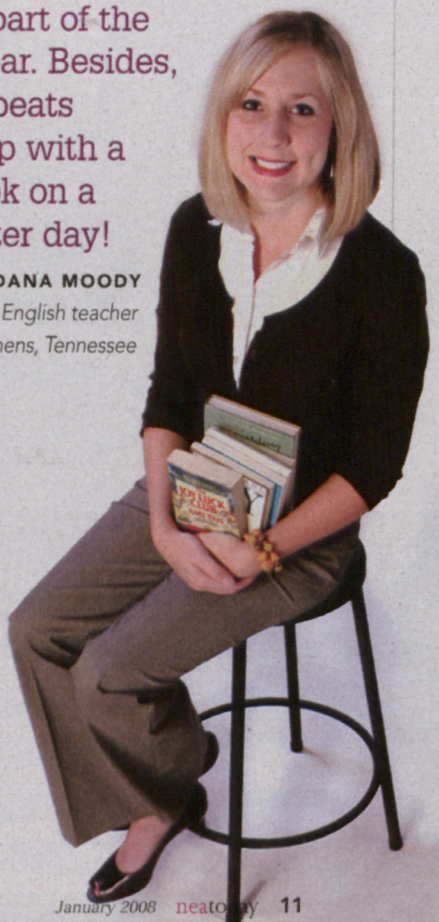
Last year after winter break, I signed my class up for a "School Night at the Apple Store," a program hosted by Apple Stores to showcase student projects created on Apple tools for family, friends, and other teachers. I had the students sign up on two clipboards, one with projects we had created using computers in the beginning of the year, the other to create new project ideas. Working in partners, my fourth-graders whirled into action. They grabbed computers, cameras, and camcorders, working whenever they could to prepare their iMovies, slide shows, podcasts, and blogs. Suddenly, it was April, time for a very exciting night at the Apple Store.

LINDA LABOWITZ, *fourth-grade teacher, Havertown, Pennsylvania*

How do you beat the post-holiday blahs?

My students and I recharge by doing literature circles. Students choose their own books and read and discuss them in small groups. They love to have a choice in what they read, and it's interesting for me to sit in on their book discussions. Students often say that literature circles were their favorite part of the whole year. Besides, nothing beats curling up with a good book on a cold winter day!

DANA MOODY
high school English teacher
Athens, Tennessee



We want to hear from you!

SO TELL US: WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOUR STUDENTS TAUGHT YOU? WHAT WORD BEST DESCRIBES YOUR TEACHING STYLE? PLEASE USE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES AND ANECDOTES, AND WE'LL CONSIDER YOUR SUBMISSION FOR AN UPCOMING ISSUE OF *NEA TODAY*. VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/FORUMS OR E-MAIL CINDY LONG AT CLONG@NEA.ORG.

PHOTO: DAVID HUMBER

2008 NFIB Young Entrepreneur Awards

At least 400 graduating high-school senior entrepreneurs will receive a $1,000 Young Entrepreneur Award next spring from the NFIB Young Entrepreneur Foundation. One outstanding student will be selected to receive a $10,000 award. If one of your students has the passion to be an entrepreneur or small-business owner and will be entering their freshman year of college in the fall of 2008, they could be our next Young Entrepreneur Award recipient. Help pump up students' entrepreneurial spirit and have them visit **www.NFIB.com/YEA** to apply or talk to a guidance counselor for more details.

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Let's Get Loud

Make your voice heard NOW!

NEA members and other educators scored an important success in November when the chairs of the House and Senate education committees announced they would not try to push a revamped "No Child Left Behind" law through Congress right away. They said they would take up the law again in 2008—that's now. Educators have been urging Congress to take the time to get the next revision of the law right, rather than imposing another unworkable law like the one we have now. Congress is listening. So speak up.

NEA members and lobbyists are asking Congress to:

HOLD SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE for multiple measures of student achievement, not just test scores;

GIVE SCHOOLS CREDIT for growth in student scores, even if they're not "proficient" yet;

ALLOW FOR FAIR ASSESSMENT of students with disabilities and students who are still learning English;

INCLUDE (AND FUND) class size reduction;

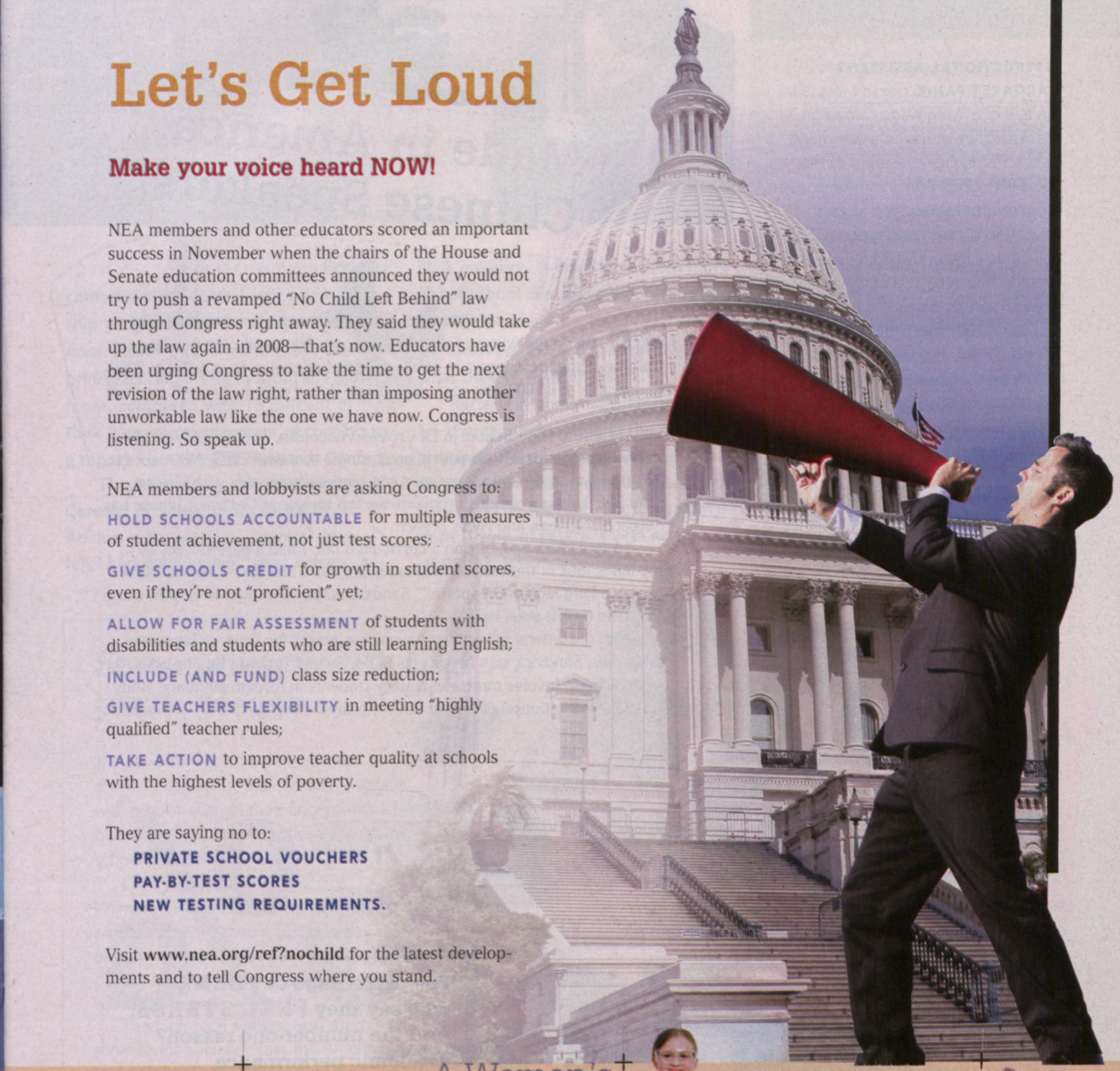
GIVE TEACHERS FLEXIBILITY in meeting "highly qualified" teacher rules;

TAKE ACTION to improve teacher quality at schools with the highest levels of poverty.

They are saying no to:

PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS
PAY-BY-TEST SCORES
NEW TESTING REQUIREMENTS.

Visit **www.nea.org/ref?nochild** for the latest developments and to tell Congress where you stand.



Chinese Classes **14**

你好

A Woman's Place is in the Lab **16**

A Sub's Magic **18**

CAPITOL BUILDING: NANCY BRAMMER; MAN WITH MEGAPHONE: MORGAN LANE PHOTOGRAPHY

Fashion Statement

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT MARGARET PANIK doesn't just talk the talk of a living wage campaign—she wears her words on a campaign T-shirt. Panik, vice-president of the Fairfax (Virginia) Education Association, is fighting to raise wages for her education support professional (ESP) colleagues. In her district, where the average house costs a cool half-million dollars, starting pay is still below $20,000. (That's food-stamp wages, people!) Panik and her fed-up team are calling for a living wage of at least $32,000—just like all other county employees. "The ESPs in our county are ready to boil over. They're upset with their working conditions. They're upset with their wages," she says.

To learn about NEA's professional pay campaign, see www.nea.org/pay.

Made in America: Chinese Speakers

ONCE A CURIOSITY on campuses, Chinese classes are soaring into the mainstream on the wings of a global economy. Nationally, the number of Chinese-language learners in public schools has grown from 5,000 in 2000 to upwards of 50,000; last year, the College Board gave its first AP exam in Chinese.

At Central High School in La Crosse, Wisconsin, Thom Sandvick pioneered a program in 1988 with a small, single-semester class. Now, about 120 students study up to four years of Chinese, sometimes with visiting scholars. Although Spanish remains the top tongue at Central, Chinese has outpaced German and rivals French.

"A few years ago, during a curriculum fair, I had a parent walk up to my table, look at the various languages out there and say, 'Chinese! Now there's a language of the future!'" Sandvick says. "I wanted to stop him and say, 'The time is now, bud!'"

With the federal government awarding grants for Chinese language programs, Sandvick says he expects to see further growth. But, he adds, the key will be to involve more elementary students in foreign language study.

"China is a household word now," he says.

85%

The percentage of TEENS who say they FEEL STRESS. And the number-one reason? Academic performance.

SOURCE: AN ASSOCIATED PRESS/MTV SURVEY

MARGARET PANIK: SANDY SCHAEFFER; CHINESE LETTERING: ATROUSKAYA ALISA; NEEDLE AND THREAD: SIEDE PREIS

The changing face of principals

YOUR NEXT PRINCIPAL is more likely to come from the central office or a leadership program than the classroom next door. Fewer than 5 percent of new principals came directly from the classroom, compared with 15 percent of their veteran counterparts, according to a report from the EPE Research Center.

They're missing out, cautions North Carolina principal Tasha Christian Adams, who taught for several years. "I felt I had dues to pay," says Adams, an NEA member. "I wanted to learn more about school climate and different roles, as well as pursue my National Board Certification. [Now I] can identify with what they've been through."

Racial and gender demographics are changing, too. Among the newest principals, 54 percent are women and 20 percent are ethnic minorities. That compares with 36 percent and 15 percent, respectively, of veterans with at least 10 years of experience.

Some privacy with that pizza, please.

A NEW TECHNOLOGY that allows students to pay for their chicken nuggets with a quick scan of their fingerprints already has been installed, then deactivated, in some school districts.

Citing constitutional concerns, Wilmette, Illinois, school officials turned off their scan machines, just one day after firing them up, fearing that the system violated a new state privacy law that forbids the use of students' biometric information without parental permission.

The high-tech system, also used in Ohio, is another "troubling sign of our surveillance society," says the American Civil Liberties Union. But makers of the technology say the fingerprints aren't nearly police quality, and some parents do appreciate its efficiency, which allows Internet deposits to their children's lunch accounts. It's a whole lot easier than folding a dollar into their bobby socks.

+ notepad

PUT DOWN YOUR PENCILS

Written standardized tests may be on their way out in Utah, where state education leaders hope to use adaptive, online tests instead. The proposal, made by the state superintendent, has won early support by legislators, but formal approval or action is still at least a year away.

Adaptive tests are exams that change as students take them, getting easier or harder depending on a student's success with previous questions. Proponents believe they provide a better picture of an individual's skills, plus they can provide results to teachers more quickly.

But the plan faces at least one Goliath—and that's the No Child Left Behind law, which refuses to let states use these kinds of tests. By defying it, states risk losing federal money.

WHAT'S ON TV?

The average child spends more time watching TV than in school, and that means "parents need to make smart viewing choices to foster learning at home," says NEA President Reg Weaver, who helped launch the Smart Television Alliance late last year.

"TV viewing remains the number one source of media consumption by children of all ages," Weaver says. But, with smart choices, parents can use TV as a learning tool, he adds.

For more information, go to www.smarttelevisionalliance.org.

50S PRINCIPAL: HANS BETHLEM, TODAY'S PRINCIPAL: ASIA IMAGES GROUP; PIZZA SLICE: NICHOLAS PICCILLO; FINGERPRINTS: UNDERGROUNDARTS.CO.UK

What if...

Marie Curie had lost interest in science?

FACT OR FICTION? Little Marie probably won't like science as much as little Albert. (Icky! Gross!) And, if her teachers work too hard to get her interested, they'll probably just turn off the boys.

Couldn't be less true, according to the National Science Foundation's Research on Gender in Science and Engineering program.

A recent study of fourth-graders showed that 66 percent of girls and 68 percent of boys said they liked science. But, at the same time, if you ask an elementary student to draw a picture of a scientist, most scribble a White male in a lab coat. (If they do draw a woman, she doesn't look happy!) By eighth grade, twice as many boys as girls say they'll pursue science or math as a career—and that's probably because of negative stereotyping, researchers said.

Lingering teacher biases are part of the problem, researchers said. If a boy asks for help during an experiment, a teacher often will explain how to do it. If a girl asks, the teacher often will simply do the experiment. But if teachers take steps to involve the girls, it helps everybody. (And that's a fact!)

A Record Low in Child Mortality

FOR THE FIRST TIME since 1960, when public health activists began keeping track, the number of children dying across the world has fallen below 10 million a year, according to the United Nations Children's Fund. Officials there credit the decline to more measles vaccinations, more women breast-feeding instead of mixing formula with dirty water, and more babies sleeping under mosquito nets.

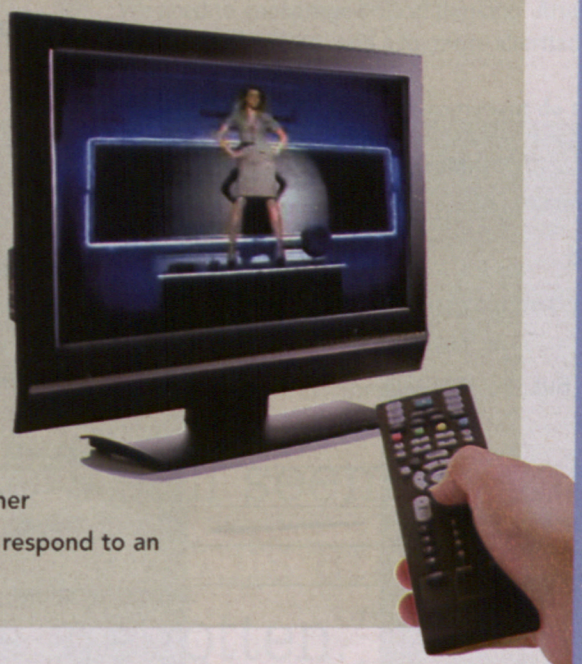
SCIENCE GIRL PHOTO: ANDERSEN ROSS; BABIES PHOTOS: PUNCHSTOCK

The Fashion Police

Pull up those pants, young man—or go to jail. As local legislators attempt to regulate decency in their hometowns, sagging pants have become a criminal offense in some communities. In one Louisiana town, the underwear-exposing style, inspired by over-sized, no-belt prison uniforms, can invoke as much as a $500 fine or six-month jail sentence.

A Dimly Lit Star

A recent Hardee's "flat bun" hamburger commercial, which featured a teacher gyrating on top of her desk, was "irresponsible," "unbelievably demeaning," and "sexually exploitative," said Tennessee Education Association President Earl Wiman—whose strong words got it pulled from airways. What do you think? Take a look at the offending ad at www.nea.org/ref?tvad, as well as other pop culture images of teachers, and respond to an *NEA Today* poll.



> global takes

YOU WORK HARDER

You teach more hours than anybody else in the developed world.

Well, maybe not you personally, but American teachers easily outrank educators in 34 other industrialized countries in the number of hours they teach, according to a new report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Americans spent 1,080 hours actually teaching (not counting lunch duty or anything else). But the international average is much lower—803 for elementary schools, 707 for junior high, and 664 for high schools.

Contrary to the widespread belief that American teachers have smaller classes, OECD also reported that U.S. schools actually have bigger-than-average classes. And to top it off, salaries here ranked just 12th among the 35 countries, and they're near the bottom when salaries are compared with a nation's gross domestic product per capita. (The country that pays the most is tiny Luxembourg! It's followed by Switzerland, Korea, and Germany.)

Want to share a story?

By mail: *NEA Today*
1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

By e-mail: neatoday@nea.org

SAGGY PANTS: PUNCHSTOCK, GAME BOARD: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.; TELEVISION: LJUPCO SMOKOVSKI, COMMERCIAL STILL: YOUTUBE

THE MAGIC WORDS

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a substitute teacher, the magic word isn't "please," although it does help. Nor are substitute teachers much entranced by movie tickets, gift certificates, or other increasingly popular bonuses from increasingly desperate school districts. Nope, according to Doug Provencio, vice president of NEA's Substitute Teacher Caucus, "the magic words are 'professional compensation.'"

In Oakland, California, where Provencio teaches, district officials have followed the trinket trend and tossed such goodies as district-embossed backpacks toward "guest teachers." But Provencio and his colleagues are much more excited about new pay raises that reach $152 a day for those who work at least 60 days. Meanwhile, a few hours south in Los Angeles, their counterparts can earn as much as $233 a day ($255 during the summer)—and also get health benefits in their second year.

"Things like respect and lesson plans help—but they're not mutually exclusive [of pay]," Provencio says.

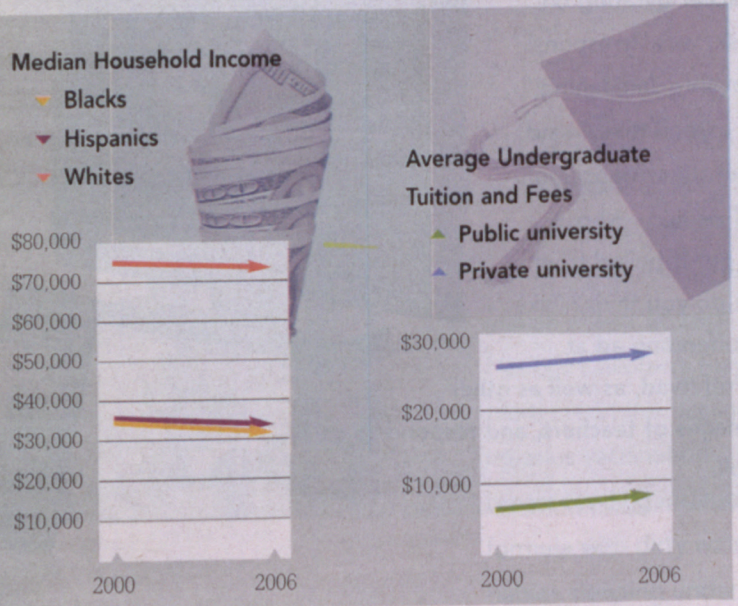
$2,000,000

The amount of MONEY New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg spent on a SURVEY to find out that almost all parents like their kids' teachers (of course!), but more than a third of teachers say they don't trust their principals.

VITAL STATS

For Many, College Still Out of Reach

The cost of college is far beyond too many families—and soaring ever higher, according to the Campaign for America's Future. But the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, signed into law late last year, should help some by expanding federal assistance.



DATA SOURCE: CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE

TEACHER: JOCELYN AUGUSTINO; TOP HAT: DEWITT; RABBIT: TOMASZ DARUL; MONEY ROLL: ALEXANDER KALINA; GRADUATION CAP: EWA WALICKA

Book Focus

THEY'RE SINGING YOUR SONG

There's the kindergartner who says, when complimented on his shiny new shoes, "Thanks! My mom stole them!" Or his classmate, who offers: "I saw my dad through the glass! And talked to him on the phone!" Author Linda Perlstein heard it all during her year at Tyler Heights Elementary in Maryland, and wrote it down for us in her new book, *Tested: One American School Struggles to Make the Grade* (Henry Holt). The story won't be unfamiliar to anybody who works in education today. Like many of you, Tyler Heights teachers are under intense pressure to meet the demands of NCLB, and they're doing it—they're making progress. But corners are cut. Art, music, and P.E. are the first to go, of course, soon followed by social studies and science. When a fifth-grade teacher brings in crustaceans and their eggs, "these 11-year-olds insisted they were actual dinosaurs. The sixth-grade teacher, I kept thinking, was about to receive students who thought dinosaurs weren't extinct...." Still, as familiar (and depressing) as it is, Perlstein's book is required reading for anybody who struggles to explain how the federal education law is shaping instruction.

Q&A

Russ Feingold

U.S. SENATOR FROM WISCONSIN

Feingold, a Democrat, was one of just 10 senators to vote against the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) in 2001. Now he's the sponsor, along with Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Daniel Akaka (D-HI), and Ron Wyden (D-OR), of the Improving Student Achievement Act, which NEA, the Wisconsin Education Association Council, and many other education groups support.

What would the Improving Student Achievement Act do?
It would allow states to use something in addition to standardized tests in their accountability systems. Each school could demonstrate through multiple measures that they are succeeding [by using] things like applied learning projects, portfolio-based assessments, assessments designed by the teacher, graduation rates.

Why did you file this bill?
I go to a town meeting in every Wisconsin county every year. And it's a very rare session where you don't have a school board member or a superintendent or a teacher come and say, "Look, this thing is making a mess out of a good school system." Teachers, administrators, school board members—who are sometimes at odds—all agree that this is getting in the way.

How do you see NCLB getting in the way?
We need to encourage critical thinking. And that involves a much broader series of activities and a lot more alternatives in accountability.

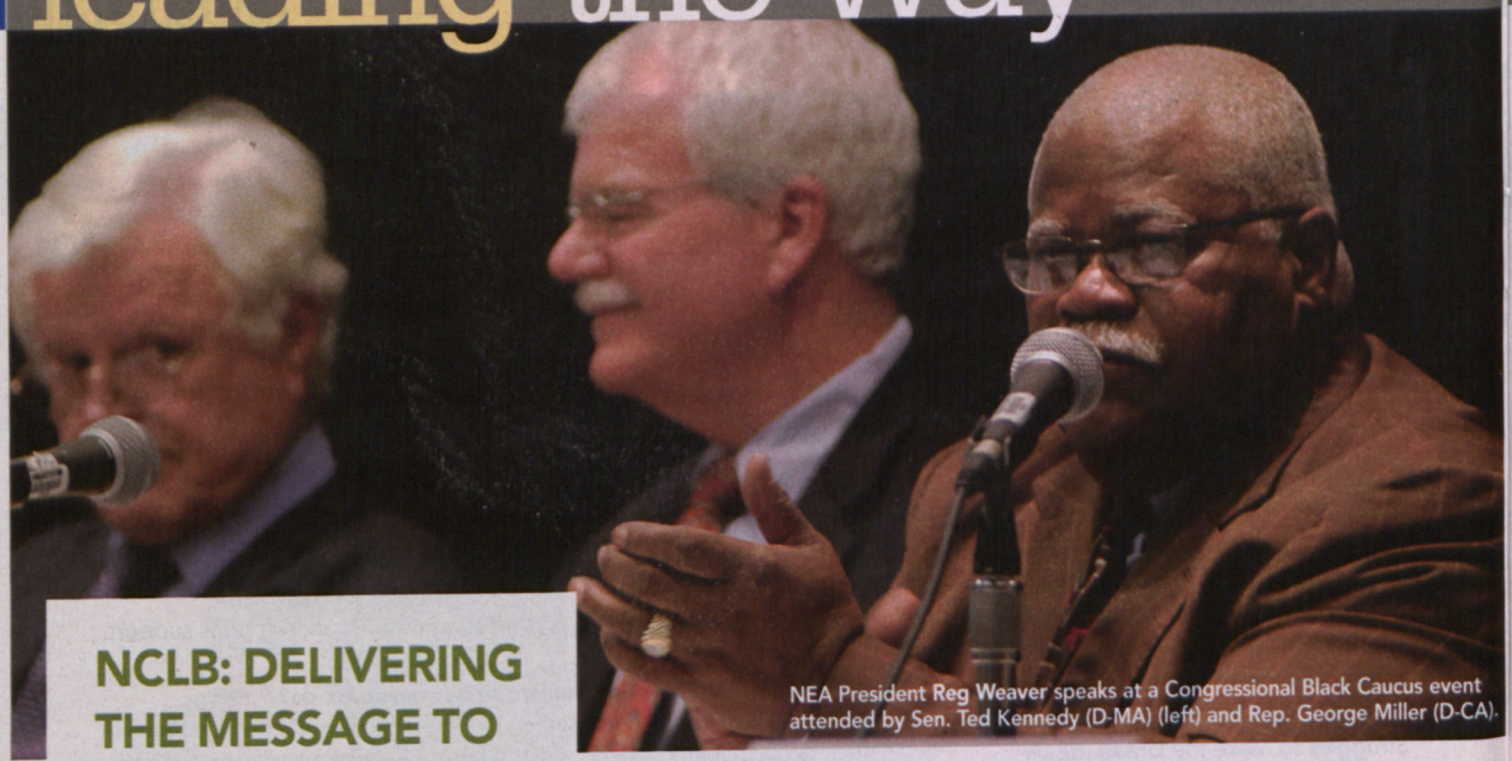
What else could the federal government do to improve education?
We have to face the realities of poverty. It's not only what goes on in the classroom—if a kid isn't able to function properly because of health and nutrition issues, the child is not going to move forward.

There's more on NCLB and NEA efforts to change it on pages 13 and 20.
Read more about this bill and ask your Senator to get on board at ***www.nea.org/ref?feingold.***

"Suburban voters still seem to believe that their own public schools are fine, even if everyone else's are rotten."

—*WALL STREET JOURNAL* EDITORIAL ON RECENT VOUCHER BATTLES, NOVEMBER 8, 2007

leading the way



NEA President Reg Weaver speaks at a Congressional Black Caucus event attended by Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) (left) and Rep. George Miller (D-CA).

NCLB: DELIVERING THE MESSAGE TO CONGRESS

BY ALAIN JEHLEN

NEA leaders are reinforcing their message to Congress on the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB), in the wake of the decision by congressional leaders not to rush passage of a new law last fall.

The postponement is a victory for children and public educators, but a new push to reauthorize NCLB, the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, could still come any time, NEA lobbyists say.

NEA leaders spent much of the fall telling Senators and Representatives about the harm that the current law is doing to our schools and organizing members to make the case for fundamental change directly to their federal legislators.

"Our children are more than just test scores and our schools need to be more than just test prep factories," NEA President Reg Weaver told the Congressional Black Caucus at one of his many stops on the NCLB campaign trail.

NCLB formally expired in September, but it is still in effect under an automatic extension.

Last September, the House committee that deals with education circulated a draft of a new law that only slightly reduced the focus on test scores. It also added incentives for school districts to start pay-for-test score salary plans. Some congressional leaders said they wanted a quick vote. But NEA and many other education organizations opposed the draft, and in November, the chairs of both Senate and House committees on education announced they would wait until at least 2008.

For years, NEA members have been working at the grassroots level, trying to show the public and Congress that the law actually does the opposite of what its name says, because it punishes educators who work with the students who are the most at-risk of school failure.

When it passed in 2001, the law had broad support, largely because of its noble name and goals. But the real thing is a different story, and as reality set in, there have been mounting calls for fundamental changes coming from educators, parents, state legislatures, ethnic and civil rights organizations, religious groups, and others working for better public schools.

NEA has put a high priority on getting the law to recognize multiple measures of achievement, not only one-size-fits-all standardized tests, because it takes more to succeed in the modern workplace than an aptitude for multiple-choice questions.

"We need programs that actually prepare children to succeed," Weaver said.

And he listed five keys to better education:

HIGH-QUALITY early childhood education,
SMALLER classes,
PROFESSIONAL pay for educators,
TUTORING and mentoring for children who are at risk, and
A NATIONAL drive to reduce the dropout rate.

Weaver and other NEA leaders have criss-crossed the country and knocked on doors in the Capitol asking political leaders on both sides of the political divide to listen to public school educators. Weaver has authored op-ed pieces on the law in leading national newspapers and organized state and local NEA leaders to lobby their members of Congress.

"This law has accomplished one thing: It has provided data and statistics that prove that the achievement gaps exist. But educators already knew that," Weaver told a conference sponsored by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute.

The NCLB situation may change fast. Congress is slated to start its second session January 15. Watch **www.nea.org/ref?leading** to see what's happening now and what NEA members can do.

And if you need more reasons why NCLB must change, go to page 24 and read how it's affecting schools whose whole focus is on leaving no child behind—in the real world.

PHOTO: SANDY SCHAEFFER

EDUCATION WINS BIG AT THE POLLS

State Associations Help Elect Allies, Defeat Vouchers

Utah voters recently defeated what may have been the nation's most comprehensive education voucher program. Referendum 1 failed with more than 60 percent of voters in every county. "We believe this sends a clear message," said Kim Campbell, president of the **Utah Education Association (UEA).** Utah's voucher program would have provided tax-funded subsidies to students to enroll in a private school. The law had passed in the Legislature, but UEA and other voucher opponents led a petition drive that gathered 124,000 signatures to force it into a voter referendum.

Public education was also a winner in Virginia, where state Sen. Edd Houck, recent recipient of the **Virginia Education Association's (VEA)** Friend of Education award, is expected to become chair of the critical Senate Education and Health Committee. Pro-public education candidates also wrested control of the state Senate. Overall, VEA's political action committee made recommendations in 78 races, and supported candidates who won in 64 of them. "Eighty-two percent is a good winning percentage for us," says Princess Moss, VEA president. Also, members of Virginia's **Sussex Education Association** swept out the six-member school board after the board refused to support a proposal to pay education support professionals a living wage.

SEE YOU IN COURT

Associations Lead the Charge for Member Rights

The **Iowa State Education Association (ISEA)** won a state Supreme Court case protecting bargaining rights. ISEA was triumphant in a contract dispute involving the **Waterloo Education Association** and the Waterloo school district. The court ruled in October that the issue of overload pay is a mandatory subject of bargaining. The court's decision allows public employees to return to the bargaining table with overload proposals that must be negotiated by the employer.

A ruling by a Las Vegas District Court judge, in a case involving local police and firefighters, could require that more than 1,900 retired Clark County teachers be removed from the Public Employee Benefits Program. As a result, the **Nevada State Education Association (NSEA)** filed a motion to allow NSEA to both submit a brief and participate in oral arguments before the court. "It is hard enough to recruit teachers and support professionals to Nevada," says NSEA President Lynn Warne. "This is bound to make matters worse."

BARGAINING FOR THE FUTURE

New Contracts Up Salaries, Involve New Members

The **Burlington Education Association (BEA)** in Vermont recently ratified a contract with the school district that phases in a livable wage allotment for paraprofessionals. BEA sought an hourly wage that meets an individual's or family's basic needs and taxes. The contract calls for boosting pay this year to $10.20 an hour, rising to $14.15 an hour in the fourth year of the contract, which runs through 2011.

In Bethel, Washington, teachers approved a two-year contract that includes higher salaries. Tom Cruver, president of the **Bethel Education Association,** says the pay hikes will help retain and attract teachers and are a worthy expense that the district can afford. "It's a matter of priorities," says Cruver.

The 35-member **Chesterfield Township Education Association (CTEA)** in New Jersey bargained pay raises through both member organizing and involvement in a region-wide coordinating council. CTEA President Gwendolyn McCreary says the unit enlisted "newer, younger members who are more involved now." The local secured a four-year agreement with no health insurance concessions and a starting teacher salary of $44,809, which progresses to $48,011 in 2009-10.

Report Card

We check out who's making the grade—or needs improvement—in education around the country.

F Patrick Byrne

The Overstock.com chief executive and his family gave nearly $2.6 million to the voucher effort in Utah (see above). He called the referendum a "statewide IQ test" that Utahans failed. Voucher supporters spent more than $4 million total in Utah.

A Kentucky Gov.-elect Steve Beshear

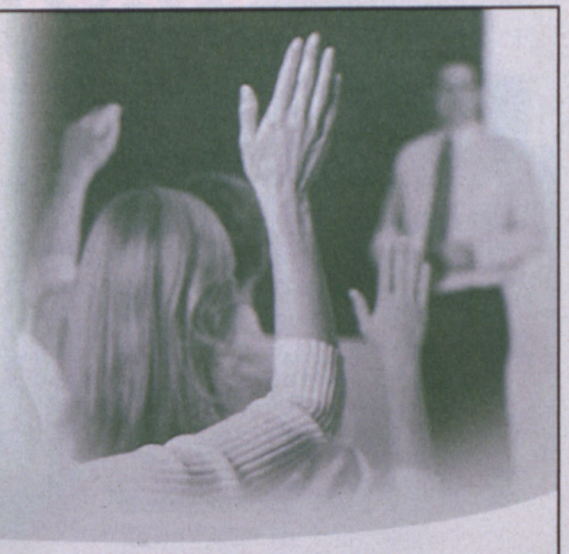
With an avalanche of business and personnel items to review on the day after his election, Beshear said he would contact the Kentucky Board of Education to discuss their plans to appoint a new education commissioner.

F Wal-Mart

An investigation of Wal-Mart's local property tax records finds that the retail giant systematically seeks to minimize its payment of taxes that support public schools and other government services. See the report at www.goodjobsfirst.org/pdf/walmartproptax.pdf.

BYRNE: WEB SITE; BESHEAR: KY GOV. WEB SITE; WAL-MART: OFFICIAL WEB SITE

IF YOU WANT TO TEACH, LEARN TO REACH.



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To receive a grant, your idea doesn't have to change the tide in education. Just create a ripple.

Jay Steven Vavra, Rod Buenviaje and Tom Fehrenbacher, teachers in San Diego, California, had a smart way to engage students in environmental stewardship. The NEA Foundation gave them funding to make it happen. Your idea could be grant worthy, too. Visit us online to learn more. Applications are now being accepted for the **February 1st deadline.**

THE NEA FOUNDATION

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PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

For ESPs in merged locals, identity and unity are key.

BY JOHN ROSALES

Paraprofessional Donna Schulze says belonging to a merged local with teachers is like being in a marriage.

"Each partner has their own personality," says Schulze, vice president of the merged Howard County Education Association (HCEA) in Maryland. "But you need to develop an 'us' personality, not just a 'you and me' personality."

A merged local, whose members include both education support professionals (ESPs) and teachers, may also be referred to as "wall-to-wall," "all-inclusive," or "unified."

Teachers and ESPs in Howard County have been merged since 1989. At first, says Schulze, support professionals were concerned that their job issues and school and Association roles would be overshadowed by teacher concerns.

"ESPs were afraid they would lose their voice," she says. "There are a lot more teachers than ESPs."

From left: HCEA President **Ann DeLacy,** UniServ staffers **Dan Collins** and **Cheryl McLeod,** and Vice President **Donna Schulze** help lead a merged local in a state with "teachers" in their Association's name.

> "Whatever the issues, the strength of any organization is unity."
>
> — **NJEA President Joyce Powell**

Howard County Education Association is one of the largest merged locals in NEA with 3,690 teachers and 970 ESPs. The Association refers to the groups as "certificated" and "paraprofessional," respectively.

"There is strength in numbers," says Schulze. "The teachers won't sign their contract unless we sign ours."

Though HCEA is merged, they have two separate contracts that run through 2010. Next time, both groups hope to negotiate simultaneously, says Ann DeLacy, HCEA president.

"It's more efficient to negotiate one contract," says DeLacy, a veteran teacher. "If we work together as a team, I don't think anyone will lose their identity."

The issue of identity is key for ESPs in merged locals. Support professionals have several concerns specific to their jobs—subcontracting, split workdays, health and safety contract language, classroom management, and job descriptions—all of which must be addressed for them to feel included.

The Maryland State Teachers Association (MSTA), a merged affiliate, recently tackled the issue of identity and inclusion at its annual conference by considering a name change that would have replaced the word "teachers" with "education." Although 60 percent of delegates voted to change MSTA to MSEA, the amendment failed for lack of a required two-thirds majority vote.

"They said we lost because MSTA is our brand name and it would cost a lot of money to change the stationery, among other things," says DeLacy. About 17 percent of MSTA's 67,000 members are support professionals.

"You get used to a new name," says Joyce Powell, president of the merged New Jersey Education Association (NJEA). "Whatever the issues, the strength of any organization is unity."

About 43 percent of school employees nationwide are support staff, according to NEA.

Maryland is one of only seven state Associations with "teachers" in their name. The others are California, Hawaii, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas. In those states, too, there are some who favor merged unions and would like to see it reflected in a more generic Association name containing "education" instead of "teacher." Others, however, prefer keeping a historical and familiar name.

"The California Teachers Association [CTA] has such a strong brand statewide," says NEA Executive Committee Member Paula Monroe, an ESP from Redlands. "Anytime CTA is mentioned, it carries a lot of weight."

Whether their union is merged or separate, Monroe says it is important for ESPs to maintain a strong identity within their Associations. "It is easy for ESPs to be overshadowed by teachers," she says, since teachers usually account for at least a third or more of the roster and sometimes occupy all elected seats.

"CTA, recognizing that, has taken steps to make sure ESPs maintain their seats on state councils," says Monroe, who favors separate locals. She is a former president of the Redlands ESP Association, which co-owns an office building with the Redlands Teachers Association.

"Every state has to do what is best for that state," says NJEA's Powell, who started her career as a paraprofessional before becoming a teacher. "The real relevance is that people feel included in the overall goal of the organization."

PHOTO: CHARLES VOTAW

IS THIS WHAT FAILURE LOOKS LIKE?

How NCLB gets it all wrong.

BY ALAIN JEHLEN AND MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

IF THE STAFF OF THE FRANK M. TEJEDA ACADEMY in San Antonio had a motto, it might well be "No Child Left Behind." And because of that, the federal law of the same name is punishing them.

Tejeda only takes students who can't make it in a regular school. It's the district's safety net, offering individual attention, help with day care for young mothers, and an endless supply of second chances: No matter how many times a student fails, if the student really wants to try again, Tejeda will take him or her back.

A school like that can't pass muster with the No Child Behind law (NCLB) as it stands today.

Tejeda and the three other schools in this series are unusual. But most public schools have some number of students like theirs, students who face serious obstacles to becoming educated, productive adults.

No Child Left Behind makes these students a dangerous burden threatening to sink the whole school. And the law automatically keeps raising the bar, making success harder and harder to achieve.

The latest NEA compilation shows one out of every four schools was unable to meet "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) last year, and one in seven was in "improvement" or "corrective action," which makes them subject to punishment if they receive federal Title I funds.

With NCLB up for renewal, educators are telling Congress to change the law. See page 37 to find out what you can do.

Schools like the four in this report deserve gold stars, not F's.

Second Chance High

America is supposed to be the land of second chances. If you make a mess of your life, but then turn around and pull yourself together, you can still make it in America—at least, we like to think so.

In that sense, the Frank M. Tejeda Academy in San Antonio is the all-American school. It's designed specifically for kids who didn't make it in the regular high school, but want to try again.

Take Mary, for example. She started at a regular high school in 2000 and at first did well, but she got pregnant as a junior and dropped out. Two years later, she showed up at Tejeda, now with two small children, but fortunately with her husband's encouragement. From December 2005 to May 2006, Mary mastered two major English courses, U.S. history, economics, government, and a demanding computer course. She earned her diploma and applied to college, on her way to becoming a nurse.

A success story, right?

Not if you're the federal No Child Left Behind law. Mary didn't graduate in four years, so as far as the law is concerned, Tejeda failed with her.

If Tejeda had refused to admit her, Mary would have failed but the school would have looked better to NCLB. Because Tejeda takes students like Mary, she could succeed, but the school failed.

"This school is for kids who can't graduate in four years," says Principal Patricia Ramirez, an NEA member. "Students who can graduate on time should go to a regular high school, which can offer so many more academic programs."

Which means her school will never pass the NCLB graduation standard.

Tejeda has flunked AYP three years so far. Next year, it's supposed to plan for a drastic overhaul or for closure, which would quite literally leave its 150–200 students behind.

But the school district has a better idea. Kathy Bruck, executive director of Curriculum and Instruction, says they will give up Tejeda's federal Title I dollars and replace them with local revenues.

"It's a matter of doing the right thing for the students," says Bruck.

Tejeda is all about tailoring the education to the students, who are admitted to the school every Monday. They make progress—sometimes slowly, sometimes very fast—by completing "contracts" that amount to learning projects in each subject.

Algebra teacher Clay Huckins designs lessons to pull students in, like figuring out the path of a basketball shot into a hoop. Last year, some of his students flunked the state test—a heart-breaking surprise to him. "I would have bet my paycheck that they'd pass—they knew the material—but there was something about the testing situation." After a brief summer test-prep course, most did pass.

Of course, not everyone makes it at Tejeda. Last year, Huckins taught a student from a low-income, fatherless home who had flunked out of a regular high school. It was difficult to engage this boy, but Huckins stayed with him. Gradually, the boy built up momentum, until he was speeding through algebra much faster than most regular high school students would. "He's very smart, and he finished one contract after another," says Huckins. He passed the state algebra exit exam on his first try.

But this year, the boy stopped working and finally dropped out again; Huckins doesn't know why. If that boy comes back, he'll get a second chance, and a third, and a fourth if necessary.

Because no child is left behind at Tejeda. And thanks to a far-sighted district, the school won't be, either.

Tejeda Academy "is for kids who can't graduate in four years," says Principal **Patricia Ramirez**.

The Day the Music Died?

There are some pointy-headed people in Washington, D.C., (but not at NEA!) who think the worth of a school can be measured by its test scores. OK, fine. Let's show them the numbers for Fairview Elementary, a small school with big ambition, in Bloomington, Indiana.

In 2003, just 39 percent of Fairview's students passed language arts and a paltry 35 percent passed in math. But, by last year, the passing rate had grown to 60 and 59 percent, respectively. For non-special ed students alone, it was 72 percent.

You know it didn't come easy, right? This is a school where kids are so poor that teachers pack their bookbags with food on Fridays. This is a school where students trot to class from the homeless shelter down the street. (These are not excuses. They are obstacles.)

It can be a heart-wrenching place to work—and not least of all because, despite its amazing growth, Fairview still wore a scarlet F last year! It failed to meet special education attendance standards by 8/100ths of a point. "To make so many changes and so much progress and still not make it..." muses instructional coach Chris Freeman, "It was a downer."

Now, after four consecutive years of failing to meet NCLB standards, the school must plan to restructure. One proposed "solution"? Simply shutting Fairview's doors. It is, after all, serving just 250 students in an aging, handicapped-inaccessible building—and it might just be easier to move on.

But would it be better? Look inside Kathy Heise's music classroom for the answer. Heise, who has degrees in music and literacy, doesn't just teach her students to read music. She teaches them to read, period. With her younger kids, she looks at song lyrics. Where musicians find rhymes, she finds lessons in phonemic awareness. With slightly older kids, musical rhythms can be used to highlight syllables. "Metered poetry, you could call it," she says.

Some of her older students actually write in her class, answering such open-ended prompts as: "If you could create a new recipe for your favorite musician, what would it be and why?" They also learn algebraic skills when they tackle mixed-meter music. And all of these lessons are coordinated with classroom teachers, as well as state standards, so that Heise knows she's singing the right tune.

Heise previously worked specifically with English Language Learners, and she found they quickly grasped language through music. It's also a particularly effective strategy with poor children. "It opens up new ways to make connections. It just turns the key a little bit," she says.

'TO MAKE SO MANY CHANGES AND SO MUCH PROGRESS AND STILL NOT MAKE IT...'

Fairview's greatest gains have been in language arts—and the teachers have done it without drill-and-kill tactics. Freeman, the instructional coach, works with teachers and students on Readers and Writers Workshops designed to give students "time to ponder, to really read, and think about what they're reading," she says.

"As the poverty level rises, I think it's just astonishing that we've made so much progress," Freeman says. "Unfortunately, because of AYP, all you'll ever hear is the negative."

PHOTO: ALICIA CALZADA

Trouble at 'The Statue of Liberty'

"This school is the Statue of Liberty," says English teacher Cindy Watter about Napa High School, in the wine country 30 miles north of San Francisco. "We get students from all sorts of demographics, and we specialize in new immigrants." Napa is a 2005 "California Distinguished School," a distinction shared by about 1 in 20 of the state's schools. Napa also has award-winning music, dance, and journalism programs.

But for the past three years, Napa High's English Language Learners (ELLs) haven't passed the state English test, and that puts the whole school in "Program Improvement" under No Child Left Behind. The school passed in every other NCLB category.

Napa revamped its ELL program four years ago, with a new curriculum and schedule, and became a model that other schools tried to emulate. But the following year, says ELL teacher Katy Howard, the standard got tougher (NCLB requires periodic jumps in pass rates) and Napa started failing.

Why can't the ELL students pass? "They're tested too early," says Howard. "They're tested the minute they arrive."

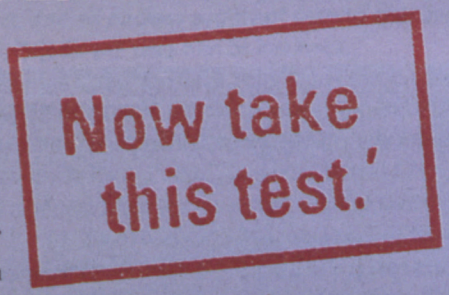
"It's like, 'Bienvenidos a los Estados Unidos! Now take this test,'" says Watter.

What's more, Howard says most of the new immigrants come from rural areas of Mexico where schooling is sporadic. "Probably 60 percent of my students are not even proficient in Spanish," she says.

Under "Program Improvement," even though it's only the ELL students who haven't met the standard, Napa High scrapped its literature program for lower level 9th- and 10th-grade

'BIENVENIDOS A LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS!

native speakers. That's not all bad, says English teacher Sarah Villegas, who teaches bottom level readers. She was given a very elementary reading program to use, and it works.



"I've seen tremendous growth, not just in the test data but in the smiles on kids' faces when they complete their first book. Some of these kids never thought of graduating from high school before."

The program harps on reading mechanics, but Villegas' students also have 20 minutes every day to read for pleasure, with books written at reading levels as low as second grade, but with high school-appropriate content.

Students with slightly better reading ability get a different program, also new to Napa High, built around an anthology of book excerpts and short stories. It's a text so geared to the state test that the standards are printed right in the margins so students know what the state expects them to "achieve" on every page: "Identify story elements like plot and characters," and so on. Villegas says that both teachers and students feel this program is not about reading for pleasure or for enlightenment, just higher scores.

English teachers were told to attend long workshops with consultants on how to teach the new program. Cindy Watter refused: "I'd rather have chemotherapy than attend another meeting with them," says this two-time cancer survivor.

Watter insists on the value of teaching complete novels like *The Scarlet Letter*. "If I say, 'ignominious' and define it, and act it out, and draw a picture—they won't learn what it means," she explains. "But in chapter 6 of *The Scarlet Letter*, they get it."

She muses that perhaps it's all some sort of trick: "Maybe by forbidding literature, they figure they'll get the students to run around embracing books."

But it's no trick and worse is coming. This year, under NCLB, the percentage of students scoring "proficient" must go up again. If Napa's immigrants keep not passing, in three years the school must be "reconstituted," which could mean replacing the staff or closing Napa High, no matter how distinguished.

'The Best School in the Universe'

The South Bronx may be America's most infamous blighted urban area, but at the tip of the South Bronx there's a big elementary school with the pluck to call itself "the best school in the universe."

That's not an empty boast for PS 48. With virtually 100 percent low-income, minority students, this school has been among the top scorers in the Bronx, beating out much wealthier schools on the state test; so even by the measure Washington insists on, PS 48 is a standout.

What's more, teachers say, PS 48 achieves success in a very unusual way. Many urban schools have adopted rigidly structured drills to push up scores, but PS 48 is heading in the opposite direction: toward student-centered, individual, and small group instruction.

"In my room," says fifth-grade teacher Sandra Zadrima, "I want children exploring, analyzing literature, teaching each other, and having fun." And most of the time, Zadrima achieves that goal, with a lot of help from her colleagues.

The school culture encourages collaboration. "We take the best of what each teacher has and combine it," says special education teacher Celia Abuin. "You need help? Teachers will come in and demonstrate a lesson for you." There's a full-time staff developer for each grade in this 1,000-student, K–5 school, plus two teaching consultants imported from Australia.

The results are impressive. Reporters for the *PBS NewsHour* and the *New York Times* have visited PS 48 and sent back glowing reports.

But the standardized tests that start in grade three do exact their pound of flesh. Most of the year, Zadrima devotes one period in the seven-period day to test prep, which jumps to three periods as testing approaches. And despite her efforts to make test prep fun, says Zadrima, "Sometimes, I bore them to death."

She has a triple job: to spark a love of learning; to impart the fine art of psyching out multiple-choice questions; and for some children from chaotic homes, to be an extra Mom—which is what some of

Despite her efforts to make mandatory test prep fun, fifth-grade teacher **Sandra Zadrima** admits to sometimes boring her students "to death."

these fifth-graders accidentally call her.

But NCLB doesn't recognize the extraordinary challenges or the quality of this staff's effort, nor does it see the high overall test scores. All that matters for federal accountability purposes is that the school's special education students have flunked the test four times: Now PS 48 is on the ropes.

"For some of my students, who are close to passing, the extra push is good," says Abuin, who teaches some of those special education students. "But for others, the test is total frustration. They break down. Some refuse to take it. Some just bubble."

Because PS 48 keeps failing, the school must send parents letters informing them of their right to transfer their students to other schools that are passing AYP. Last year, about 30 families did that.

"It kills me," says Principal Roxanne Cardona. "The parents don't understand. Some of the children are going to schools that actually have lower scores than we do, but those schools are smaller, and have fewer than 30 special education students." Under NCLB, each subgroup of students must pass if it meets the minimum number of students, and in New York, that number is 30.

What will happen to PS 48 if NCLB isn't changed? Cardona has a prediction: "They'll chop our school into five mini-schools," she says. That won't boost scores, but each of the mini-schools will have fewer than 30 special education students, whose scores will be averaged in with other students, allowing each of the mini-schools to pass.

The likely benefit to students of this "reform"? None. nea

—TIM WALKER CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT

Send comments on these stories to ajehlen@nea.org.

nea.org

There Oughta Be a BETTER Law

Congress is now working on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, whose current incarnation is the so-called No Child Left Behind law. (See pages 13 and 20 for more details.) NEA is asking Congress to take out the one-size-fits-all provisions of the law, which are sinking all four of these schools and thousands more.

GO TO WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?NCLB FOR THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS, NEA'S PROPOSALS, AND HOW YOU CAN HELP WITH YOUR OWN MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.

PHOTO: DIMA GAVRYSH

QUESTIONS

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HOW DO I PROTECT HER FUTURE?

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CONT0108

My Debt, My Life

NEA MEMBERS ARE STRUGGLING WITH STUDENT LOAN DEBT OF UNPRECEDENTED PROPORTIONS. HERE'S WHY IT MATTERS, EVEN IF YOUR COLLEGE DAYS (AND BILLS) ARE A THING OF THE PAST.

BY CYNTHIA KOPKOWSKI

Funny thing about educators, they're good at math. Some of them even teach it. So they know that if they make $28,000 a year and owe $15,000 on student loans, they're in big trouble.

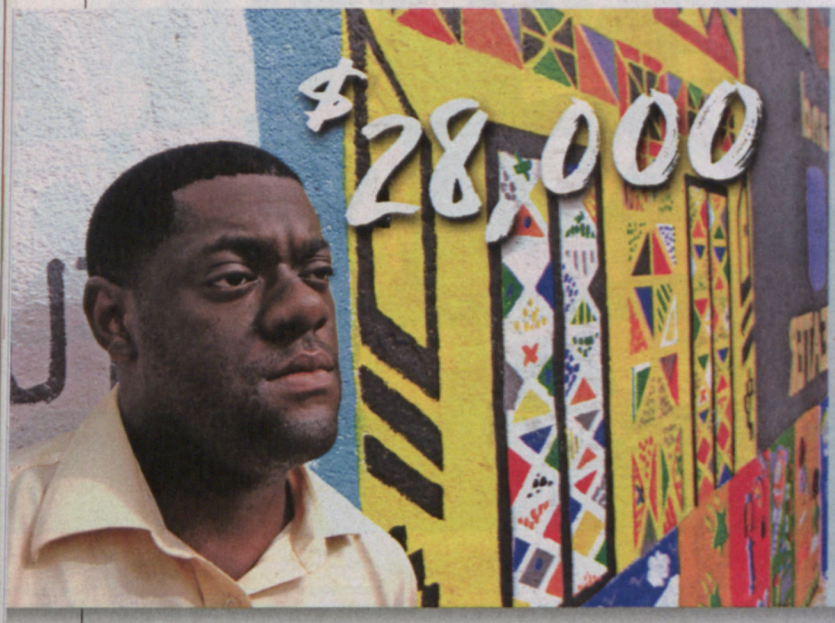
That's the kind of arithmetic that a growing number of them, especially new teachers and current education majors, are agonizing over as college costs balloon and salaries stagnate. Many young people, increasingly savvy about their future income-to-debt ratio, are making decisions about careers based on the reality of having to repay loans. So at a time when there is a great need for qualified teachers, young people are discouraged from entering the profession.

Today, two-thirds of four-year college graduates leave with student loan debt, compared with less than a third just 10 years ago, according to the State Public Interest Research Group's Higher Education Project. And they carry twice as much debt as they did 10 years ago, too.

"We absolutely see a chilling effect," on public service professions, says Robert Shireman, director of the Project on Student Debt. "Students are setting their sights on the future and saying, 'I can't afford to be a teacher or a social worker.'"

Estimates by the research group found that 23 percent of public college graduates leave school with too much debt to manageably repay their loans on a starting teacher's salary. It jumps even higher for students leaving private colleges.

PHOTO: J.D. SCHWALM



Woodrow Price

25
FIFTH-GRADE TEACHER
PORT GIBSON, MISSISSIPPI
$28,000 IN STUDENT LOAN DEBT

I enrolled in grad school to defer my student loans. When you first enroll and fill out the forms, you really just care about getting your tuition and fees paid for. But once you start realizing how much you're going to have to pay back, it doesn't feel the same anymore. There was a time when I thought about changing my major, but I decided to stick it out. Still, when I think about these loans, I think about the burden on my family. I'm borrowing my mother's car; she's sacrificing her vehicle. I'm living somewhere I don't really want to live. There are a lot of things I really want to do but can't. I'd like to travel.

Because of the cost of living and teacher salaries, graduates are in the worst shape with unmanageable debt in New Hampshire, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Vermont, Utah, Maine, South Dakota, Montana, Connecticut, and Minnesota.

After completing his undergraduate career at Alabama A&M University, Anthony Daniels owed more in loans than he would make as a starting teacher. In part to defer the loans, and hoping to improve his salary prospects, he went to graduate school. Now he's $58,000 in debt and considering walking away from teaching in favor of law school. "Unfortunately my situation is not unique," says Daniels, the chair of NEA's Student Program. "In fact, it is becoming the norm. We are losing too many qualified teachers because of student loans. It's not just a burden, it's a barrier."

> "I'm in a situation where my kid has braces, we've got a mortgage, and I've got student loan debt."
>
> — **Terri Crothers, 44**

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

There is no "in my day, we walked five miles uphill in the snow to get to school" corollary for what's happening to today's college graduates. "Things are different for this generation compared to the last," says Shireman. "People say, 'Oh, I got through college and managed to pay,' but that's just not the case anymore because the costs are growing so significantly."

Since 1994, debt levels for graduating seniors more than doubled to $19,200, according to the Public Interest Research Group. (For 8 percent of graduates, their loans top a whopping $40,000.) Factoring in inflation, the average student debt burden in 2004 was almost 60 percent higher than in 1994.

Black and Hispanic college graduates are hit even harder than their White counterparts, according to the Project on Student Debt. Black graduates have a higher amount of student loan debt and more of them have debt than White graduates. The number of Hispanic students with debt is on par with Whites, but they carry more debt.

Among NEA members specifically, a majority of those who have been teaching less than four years have student loan debt, according to a 2006 NEA Member Benefits poll. For half of that group, the bill totals more than $15,000.

Why did this become, as one author dubbed it, "Generation Debt"?

For starters, tuition costs are rising faster than inflation—they've ballooned 42 percent in the past five years (and inflation is outpacing teacher salaries, too). That's been the trend for nearly two decades. And wages have stalled. In 2006, the median U.S. household income dropped 2 percent. Consider that families are increasingly squeezed by health care and housing costs. Then factor in that the previous Congress hiked interest rates on student loans and cut $12 billion from the Federal Student Aid program. At the same time, today's economy dictates that one needs more than a high school diploma to join the middle class. College graduates earn $1 million more during their lifetime than those without a degree, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. "So it's becoming increasingly important and increasingly expensive," to pursue higher education, says Shireman.

When it's time to find the money, students are more and more often turning to private lenders who loan money freely but often on less-favorable terms than government loans. A decade ago, private lenders were responsible for only 5 percent of the education loan dollars in use. Now they comprise 20 percent and it's become a $17.3 billion market. Sallie Mae, the largest private lender in operation, reported $1 billion in profits last year. At one online retailer, 20 bucks buys a T-shirt that states in bold, black letters, "Property of Sallie Mae."

PHOTO: J.D. SCHWALM

Ashley Davis

26
STUDENT MEMBER
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA—BIRMINGHAM
$15,000 IN STUDENT LOAN DEBT

My education is valuable to me; it will help me become the type of teacher I'd want teaching my daughter. But I'm a single mother and have to finance my education somehow. I started taking out loans about a year and a half ago. Knowing that I'm going into a profession that pays so little is very overwhelming. I want a new home but it doesn't look like it's in my future. The debt is taking away from money I could be spending on my daughter. I need a new car. Mine has 206,000 miles on it and I don't know how much longer it will last. But I have a love for children and education, and I knew from the very beginning I'm not doing this for the pay. At the same time, it's very scary knowing that I'm going to owe a lot more than I can make.

TWO GENERATIONS OF DEBT

Some households would need two of those T-shirts. As career-changers enter the profession from other fields and current teachers go back to school for master's degrees in the hopes of eking out a better salary, their bills are mounting, too.

Susan Knable, a 46-year-old special education teacher in Collins, Ohio, has $51,000 in student loan debt. She accrued it between 1990 and 2000 while working to get her undergraduate and master's degrees. Living in a rental apartment, Knable—a divorced mother of four—says she would probably be able to own a home by now if it weren't for her loans, which she likens to a 20-year mortgage. Each month, one of her paychecks goes to rent and bills. The second paycheck goes to the student loan. "I have a personal goal to get rid of that debt by 50, but I don't know if I'll make it," she says. "I might extend it to 52." Her children have now graduated and they, too, have loans. But, she points out, when her son finished college and went into the Air Force, his starting salary as a second lieutenant was a figure she didn't see until her eighth year of teaching.

Fellow Ohioan Terri Crothers, a 44-year-old art teacher in Gallipolis, carries $50,000 in student loan debt, which she started accumulating in 1996 after switching careers. That was the amount that she came up short even after investing $20,000 of her own savings in her schooling. Like many teachers who have debt but have been working for a number of years, Crothers is left out of legislation that offers loan forgiveness. Provisions that allow for cancellation of Perkins and Stafford loans for teachers working in low-income schools are limited and available only to those who got the government loans on or after October 1, 1998. Many people don't understand that "a lot of the legislation is focused on people about to come out of school," Crothers says. "But I'm in a situation where my kid has braces, we've got a mortgage, and I've got student loan debt."

On her salary, something has to give, and it's the student loans. Crothers admits that she is six months behind in her payments, a delinquency that keeps her awake some nights,

Zoua Xiong

28
STUDENT MEMBER
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MILWAUKEE
$25,000 IN PERSONAL STUDENT LOAN DEBT
$75,000 IN HOUSEHOLD STUDENT LOAN DEBT

My husband and I are both students. He's been taking a loan out every year. He only qualified for financial aid after we got married and had our son. Seventy-five thousand dollars—this is how much we're going to owe. We're hoping that if we suffer a little now, we'll be better off down the line. When we get done with school we want to buy a house, but I think we're going to have problems. With our student loans out and credit card bills, we might not have that chance.

PHOTO TOP: BUTCH DILL; BOTTOM: PETER ZUZGA

Anthony Daniels

25
STUDENT MEMBER
ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY
$58,000 IN STUDENT LOAN DEBT

I'm having second thoughts about going into teaching. How am I going to afford to have a family? Buy a house? My federal loan payment is $326 a month. My private loan payment, after I consolidated, is $300. Had I not consolidated, it would have been $600 or $700 a month. That's on a $34,000 salary. I would be living on the street at that amount. Along with my car payment and auto insurance, I was dropped from my parents' health insurance. It all adds up. It's forcing me to want to go to law school more and more.

Jenna Miller

21
STUDENT MEMBER
WALDORF COLLEGE, FOREST CITY, IOWA
$30,000 IN STUDENT LOAN DEBT

I was lucky to get some scholarships, but I've still got a little more than $30,000 in debt. I'm responsible for $17,088 and my parents are covering the remaining $13,000. I'm growing concerned about next semester. I'll be student teaching, which means I can't hold another job and I have bills to cover and car payments to make. Books alone are expensive. So I'll probably have to take out another loan to cover me while I'm student teaching. I miss being able to go out to eat or go to a movie, the simple things that add up each week. But I have such a deep passion for teaching kids and seeing their faces light up when they learn something new. I will love being a part of that. My dad is a teacher and hearing his stories is a big part of why I want to teach.

wondering how she will ever catch up. "We're teachers and we're providing a public service," she says. "Since our pay certainly isn't keeping up, we could use help on this."

Even members who aren't personally hampered by student load debt will feel its effects. Lobbying strength at the bargaining table and in legislative halls is sapped when young members aren't involved because they're overwhelmed by student loans. Worse, their debt makes them susceptible to viewing union membership as a non-essential expense. Mike Langyel, a high school teacher in Waukesha, Wisconsin, and a veteran member of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association bargaining team, sees the corrosive effect on union advocacy in his area.

"These young people are really getting killed on student loans," says Langyel, who points out that many of his young colleagues work second jobs to stay afloat. "To try to get them involved in union activities when they are struggling with student loan debt isn't going to work." Teachers are also pressured to go back to school for advanced degrees to get more money, Langyel says, meaning higher turnover on school staffs and deepening debt for them. Everyone wants their schools packed with highly qualified teachers, but when it comes to financing those advanced degrees, educators are on their own.

Observing the bind his younger colleagues are in, he thinks, "this is going to be a tough life for them."

FIGHTING ON THE HILL TO LOWER THE BILL

Assistance for future students came this past summer with the passage of legislation providing $20 billion to increase grant aid for low-income students and cut subsidies to student loan companies. The new law increases the Pell Grant program to $4,800 next year (and $5,400 by 2012) by replacing the $12 billion cut previously. Also, it slashes in half the interest rates on subsidized student loans.

This College Cost Reduction and Access Act is a sweeping piece of legislation being compared to the G.I. Bill. Student

PHOTO TOP: PATRICK RYAN; BOTTOM: DANNY PECK

Kristi Uzzo

23
SECOND-GRADE TEACHER
OSWEGO, ILLINOIS
$15,000 IN STUDENT LOAN DEBT

My grandparents set up a college fund for me. I thought that was going to be enough, but because of the tuition increase it ended up not even being enough for four years. Everyone wants good teachers to educate our youth and yet we're leaving educators with so much debt. I'm seeing people who could be really great teachers, but because of the debt they've left the field. Now that I'm officially on my own, I'm living paycheck to paycheck. I wouldn't be able to afford a mortgage. With groceries and all of my bills and insurance it's kind of scary. And I'm not even supporting a family. My district is really encouraging us to go back for our master's because the first-year teacher pay isn't all that great. A lot of people have expressed concerns about getting through it financially.

lenders fought the reform vehemently. Left out of the final law—thanks in part to pressure on legislators by NEA members mobilized by the Association's "College Affordability Concerns Me" campaign—was a troubling amendment that would have given student loan companies more than $4 billion at the expense of the grant aid to students.

But the work isn't over. NEA is redoubling its efforts to push for a $40,000 starting salary for all teachers, says Bill Raabe, director of NEA Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy. "We have a real opportunity to help engage younger members," he says. "We can show them that involvement with the Association will help them help themselves to improve salaries to, in turn, pay off those loans."

And NEA continues to advocate for legislation that will make it easier to consolidate loans. Daniels, a leader in the affordability campaign, also calls on educators to be careful observers of what candidates in the 2008 races have to say about making college more affordable. If they say nothing, or give unsatisfactory answers, they must be pushed by grassroots activism, Daniels says. "We must hold these people accountable." He'll be visiting college campuses this year, urging students to register to vote and to cast their vote based on their education priorities. "We're going to make this a turnout issue," vows Daniels.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Despite all the financial obstacles facing those with student loans, they are optimistic about their work. "I see in our young teachers a real goodness," says Milwaukee's Langyel. "They are really committed and they're really caring. The big challenge for us is to help them survive."

A little help is all Kristi Uzzo, an earnest suburban Chicago teacher, is asking for as she begins her career with a $37,000 salary and a $15,000 student-loan debt. "If you really love the profession, you'll find a way to make it work," says Uzzo, who has wanted to teach since second grade—the very grade she teaches now. "I'm committed to budgeting my money and making it work."

Wouldn't it be nice if she didn't have to "make it work" just to be able to do her work? nea

Send your comments on this story to ckopkowski@nea.org.

Your Debt, Your Life

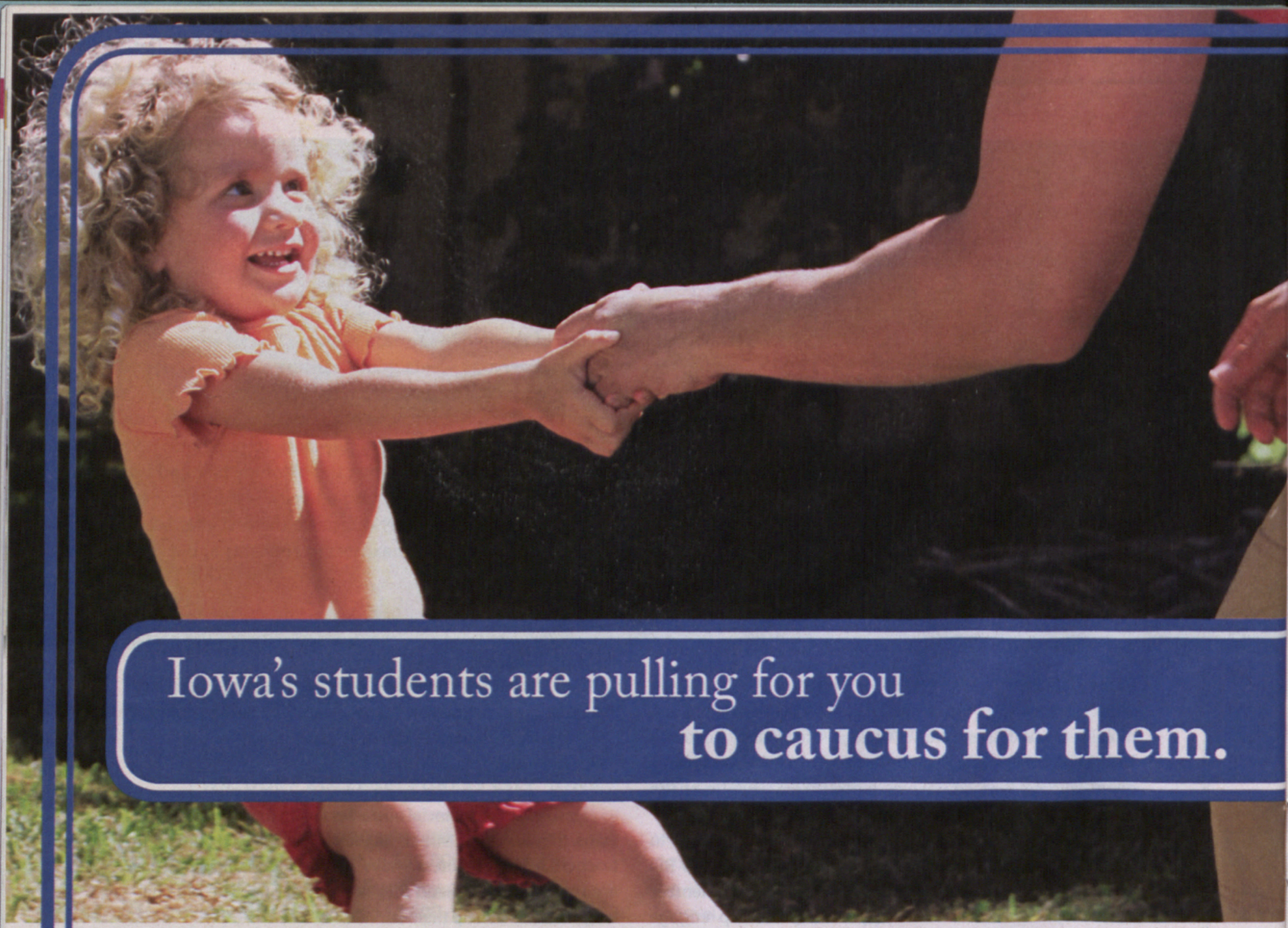
THE CONVERSATION DOESN'T END HERE

Almost immediately after we posted a query seeking teachers' student loan debt horror stories in our online forum, members began posting their amounts. $8,500 here, $169,000 there. The amounts are staggering. A couple of examples are below. To read more, head to: **www.nea.org/ref?debt**.

"Finally, someone that's in the same boat....I currently owe $90,000+ in student loans. I went back to school when I suddenly found myself without a spouse and three children to support. Because I didn't have a way of paying for the education I so desperately wanted, I had to apply for student loans." — LOISJOHNSONC

"I'm a junior in college majoring in elementary education. My current student loan debt is about $20K, and will be higher by the time I graduate. I'm terrified at the thought that when I start my new teaching career I won't be able to afford the payments on my student loans. I will not have the comforts that most college graduates can afford." — KARENMCLEROY

PHOTO: DAVID BARNES



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Keeping it REAL

Programs stressing **real-world skills** are reaching potential dropouts.

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY, CYNTHIA KOPKOWSKI, AND JOHN ROSALES

Think of an enormous societal problem—child abuse, homelessness, poverty, the proliferation of guns. Students in Massachusetts' Project COFFEE have experienced it.

More than half of these youth have serious drug problems and more than 90 percent are social users. About two-thirds have faced a courtroom judge and, last year, nearly a quarter missed school because they were waking up in jail or drug treatment centers. More than three-quarters have some kind of disability. More than a third take medication for attention and oppositional defiant disorders or other problems. And all are at risk of dropping out.

This Massachusetts community is not alone. Nationally, nearly a third of public school students fail to graduate with their class. With students all over the country—from blue Hawaii to gray New England—carrying increasingly heavy loads in life, programs that emphasize work-related skills, like Project COFFEE, help keep them in school and focused. For some, they make all the difference.

Edward deJesus, an expert on dropout prevention and president and founder of the Youth Development and Research Fund, says when teachers or mentors talk to young people about careers and help them cultivate their interests, it keeps students engaged in the education process. "When kids begin to picture themselves in the workforce," says deJesus, "they're learning who they are, what they want to do, what their talents are."

That's why increasing career education and workforce readiness programs in schools is a key point in the Dropout Prevention Plan NEA unveiled last year (see the full plan at www.nea.org/dropout).

NEA Today writers looked at three programs in strikingly different locations where educators have seen work-study and career education programs reach students in danger of dropping out and keep them on the path to a diploma.

At this Massachusetts alternative school, would-be dropouts gain pride and practical skills through hands-on, career-oriented learning projects.

There's More to Life than Bling

Project COFFEE (Co-Operative Federation for Educational Experience), an alternative middle and high school that serves an hour-wide ring around Oxford, Massachusetts, is the trailblazer in dropout prevention. It's been nearly 30 years since Oxford's educators first combined academic and occupational education with the specific goal of preventing kids from dropping out. Since then, hundreds of would-be dropouts have earned diplomas, and Project COFFEE has served as a national model for keeping kids in school.

In the mornings, students attend extremely small academic classes (no more than eight students). In the afternoons, an equal

PHOTO: STONEBRIDGE PRESS

amount of time is spent on occupational instruction, where they might be nailing together sheds for local homeowners or fixing a customer's snow-blower engine in one of five different vocational shops. It's real work—not "classroom" assignments—and the students are responsible for scoping out the job, determining the materials needed, going to Home Depot, and doing all of the things that legitimate contractors do, start to finish.

"For a lot of these kids, it's the first time in their education where they can stand back and say, 'Look at what I did,' and be legitimately proud," says Project COFFEE Counselor Nancy James.

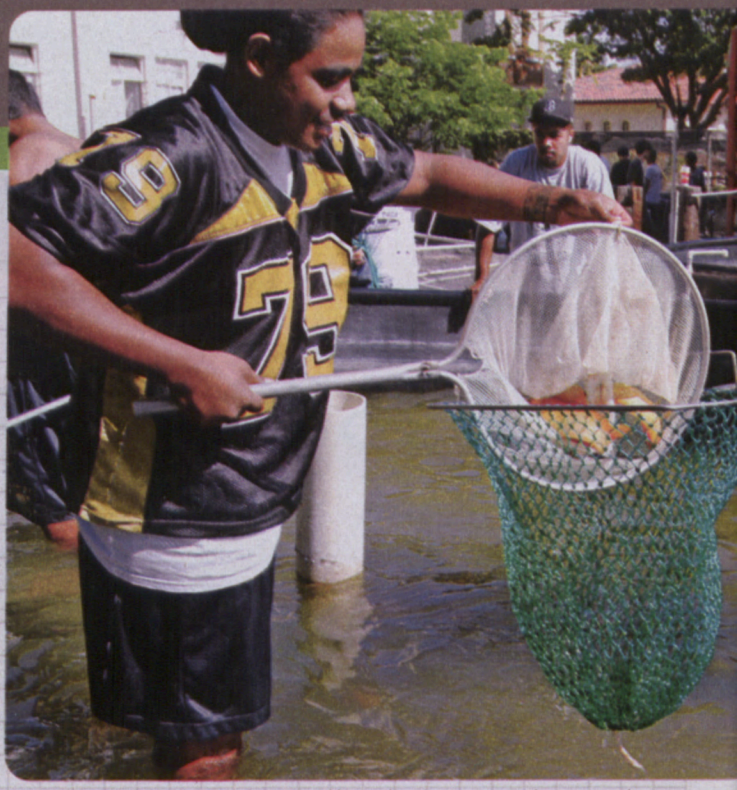
It's all about making it real.

"We're trying to show these kids that there is another life—and that life can bring them the kinds of rewards that perhaps are more meaningful than a lot of bling," says James, who has been at the school for 16 years.

There are challenges: Like the 13-year-old who was picked up at 2 a.m. by local police, $400 in his pocket, two 20-something gang members by his side. Since coming to Project COFFEE, he's been locked up for various drugs and weapons charges. Now he's out of jail, but his mother's in. When James asked him how she was coping, he said, "Oh, she's OK. My aunt's there, too, keeping her company."

And there are successes. Last year, a recovering drug addict returned to Project COFFEE after a stint in rehab, wearing a 30-day Alcoholics Anonymous pin on his lapel. James gave him a congratulatory card, which he showed around school—"Nobody has ever given me a card before!" he said.

He graduated, stayed sober, and now he drives trucks for a soda distribution company—making a good salary and, as he likes to say, "with full benefits, too."



McKinley High School's popular Aquaculture class joins science lessons and career exploration in a fish-filled pool.

With a Little Help from My Mentor

Convincing students to stay in school and work toward long-term goals like college and a job can be a lot easier with the help of someone who has actually accomplished those same goals. That's the idea behind Project Connect, a federally funded Des Moines, Iowa, public school program that partners mentors from the community and teachers with students who are at risk of dropping out.

Teachers and mentors—a group that includes medical workers, bank presidents, and engineers—work in concert to help students gain a positive view of school. The roughly 170 mentors commit to one hour a week, each week, for at least a year. "When school is a positive place and [students] know people there care about them and the mentor is a part of that school team, it increases attendance," says program director Barbara Anderson.

Once students are in the door, community members help nurture their career interests, and then, working in conjunction with teachers, show how their coursework relates to those goals. This past year, a retired mentor who worked with Iowa state government during his career arranged for several students to tour the state Capitol and visit several legislators. Another mentor, a graphic designer, brought her laptop computer to school and worked with her student on projects.

Sixth-grade language arts and reading teacher Lynne Albright watches her student's eyes light up as the clock approaches mentor arrival time. "It builds enthusiasm in the students for learning," says Albright, who works at one of the 14 schools that host mentors.

The success of the program lies in part with how educators like Albright strengthen the link between what kids learn in class and what they get from their mentors. Teachers conduct review sessions for mentors on reading and math strategies (which in some cases starts with a class full of adults anxiously trying to remember how to add fractions, says Anderson). At mentor recruiting fairs, teachers give inspirational talks to those involved with the program.

"What they're trying to do, what any of us are trying to do, is to let those children see the opportunities that are out there for them now and in the future," says fourth-grade teacher Elizabeth Bleeker. She works closely with the mentors, advising them when they come to meet with students about whether the child is having a good or a bad day, and how they're doing academically.

Anderson recalls one sixth-grade boy who struggled to read at a second-grade level. Turns out, his mother couldn't read. With the help of his mentor, who supplemented classroom instruction, he went from failing coursework to getting C's and B's. "You can just imagine how much more pleasant school is for him," Ander-

PHOTO: PHILIP SPAULDING III/PHOTOPLANT

son says. From the beginning of last year to the end of the year, absenteeism decreased 35 percent for all participants.

While Project Connect focuses its efforts at the middle and elementary school levels, Des Moines students aren't forgotten as they transition to high school. That's when a companion program, Intensive Career Exploration, picks up. Each year, up to 500 students earn credit for career-based courses, such as business, agriscience, or technology—plus they have opportunities for paid employment in their field of interest, too. Working alongside education support professionals in their own schools or in businesses in the community, "they see how their skills are applied in the workplace" says Karen Ligas, the program coordinator.

The teachers who coordinate the work-study programs, including Ligas, communicate regularly with the students' job supervisors. "It's a unique way for the teachers to have an additional mentoring role with the students," says Ligas, "to build on the relationships they already have with them."

percent of what people who have high school degrees make, according to a 2006 study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. A diploma keeps young adults' prospects open for better job opportunities and further education.

It's sometimes hard to reach teenagers with that message, especially those trying to help their parents make ends meet. But McKinley staff says drawing a close connection between what they teach in their classes and why students will need it in the working world goes a long way to keeping kids engaged in school.

The school's Occupational Skills Program (OSP) is a six-week work-study curriculum that places students in temporary jobs throughout the city, from the hotel and restaurant industry to beauty salons, video production firms, manufacturing plants, and even the Honolulu Zoo. It's just one of nine dropout prevention programs at McKinley High.

OSP students generally work up to 15 hours per week, from 8 to 11 a.m., Monday through Friday, for school credit, not pay. Meyer says the program provides not only job training, but real-world lessons about workplace protocol, punctuality, and the importance of school learning. "When [students] experience work sites or colleges," says Meyer, "they see that they have to have the reading, writing, and math skills."

Some of these short-term work assignments may lead to a job after the student graduates, but they all require the student to stay in school—those who drop out not only lose the job but also

PROVIDES REAL-WORLD LESSONS ABOUT WORKPLACE PROTOCOL.

Hangin' Loose and Hangin' On

It's not the glorious beaches and made-for-surfing waves that educators at Honolulu's President William McKinley High School worry will tempt their students to ditch classes. And although high schoolers there face the usual host of adolescent temptations, there's something else teachers fear will lure them away from school for good: a steady paycheck from one of the city's many hotels, restaurants, and spas.

No one on the McKinley staff wants to discourage students with a self-reliant streak. But when some young adults discover that they don't necessarily need a high school diploma to get a full-time job in the city's booming tourist industry, some drop out. "Why bother with a diploma," they figure, "if I can start pulling a paycheck right now? What will another year of tests and homework get me?"

It turns out, that little piece of paper means quite a bit of cash over a person's working years. High school dropouts earn only 65

the job reference from the employer.

Apart from the OSP, teachers at McKinley seize opportunities to reveal the "real-world" aspects of their lessons, too. The school's popular Aquaculture class was designed by science teacher Geoffrey Au not only to fulfill biology requirements, but also to provide students with job training.

"The students have been around fish all their lives and this [class] shows them a way they can earn a living at something they are already familiar with," Au says. After taking his class, some of his students are able to secure part-time jobs at local fish farms.

Or they can nurture their work ethics at McKinley and take off in a different direction. Healani Mathews, a student who calls Au "my second dad," says Au is helping him gear up to go to college after graduation. "I love Aquaculture class because of him, and I like working with fish. It reminds me of the kind of work my grandfather used to do." nea

Send your comments on this story to jrosales@nea.org.

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FOR MORE ON OUR CONTINUING COVERAGE OF DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS, HEAD TO WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?KIDSINSCHOOL.

Caught In The Crossfire

SCHOOLS IN OKLAHOMA GRAPPLE WITH NEW LAWS TARGETING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

BY TIM WALKER

The staff at Kendall-Whittier Elementary had an uneasy feeling that the 2007–08 school year would be anything but routine.

Signs everywhere indicated that this school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, would see drastic numbers of student absences as the school year got under way. Summer school enrollment had dipped. Fewer parents turned out for the school's annual "Preview Night." Rumors abounded that many families were too afraid to set foot on school ground.

"Something obviously wasn't right," teacher Gracye McCoy recalls. "We were hearing things. You could feel the panic. And we knew the cause was 1804."

That's House Bill 1804, or the Oklahoma Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act of 2007, an iron-fisted, anti-illegal immigration statute passed by the state legislature last April. The law, which went into effect in November, requires all state and local agencies to verify the citizenship status of job applicants and limits eligibility for state driver's licenses and ID cards to citizens, nationals, and legal immigrants. It also repeals an earlier law that permits undocumented immigrants to attend state colleges at in-state tuition levels. The law's most controversial provisions, however, make it a felony to "conceal, harbor, or shelter" undocumented residents.

The Tulsa City Council jumped into the fray with a resolution requiring Tulsa police officers to check the immigration status of anyone under arrest for felonies and misdemeanors.

The new law shocked Tulsa's Hispanic population, which includes a large and growing number of undocumented immigrants. The resulting climate of fear recalled the anxiety and suspicion created in California more than a decade earlier with the passage of Proposition 187, the referendum denying public benefits to undocumented immigrants.

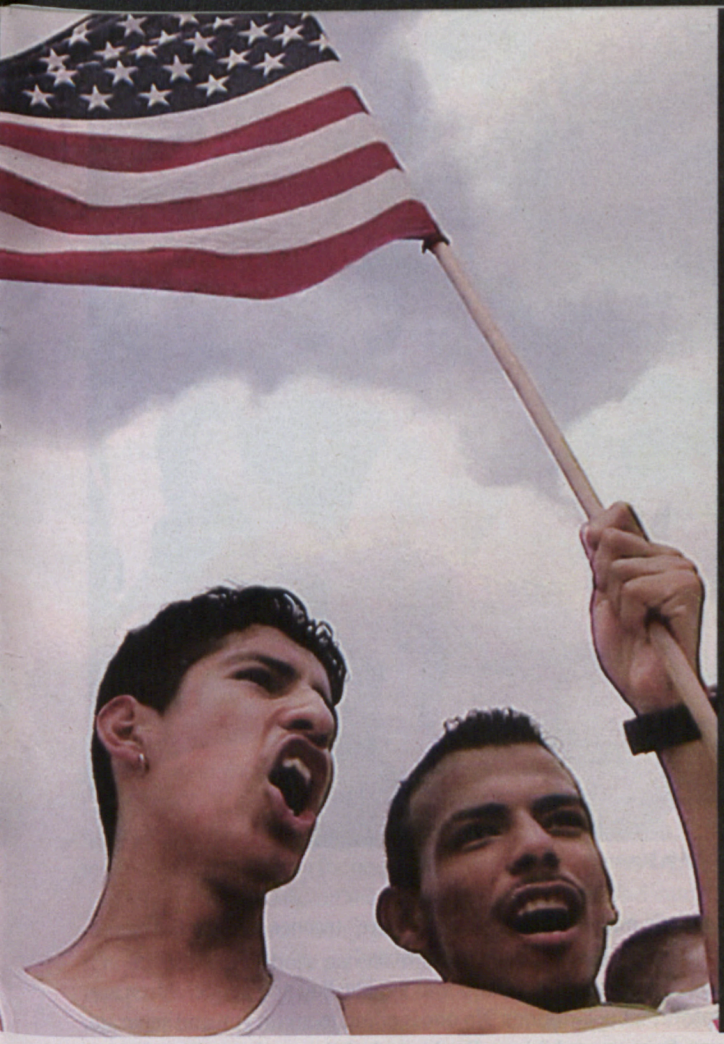
Illegal immigration draws impassioned and often incendiary rhetoric from people on opposing sides. In a moderate-size city like Tulsa, such an atmosphere can quickly erode trusted and carefully cultivated relationships among members of the community, local businesses, and institutions such as public schools.

Kendall-Whittier Elementary teacher **Monica Carrizalez**

"Parents were hearing rumors that police or INS agents would be trolling our school grounds, just waiting to pick parents up and deport them as they brought their children to school," Kendall-Whittier teacher Monica Carrizalez remembers.

Oklahoma is not the only state struggling with this complex and divisive issue. Lawmakers in many states have long been frustrated and impatient about the gridlock in Washington, D.C., over immigration reform. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, as of July 2007, no fewer than 1,404 pieces of legislation related to immigration had been introduced

PHOTO: TOM GILBERT



nationwide—twice the number reported in 2006. New laws have created a potpourri of new rules and regulations. Although some laws address education for undocumented families, *Plyler v. Doe*, the 1982 Supreme Court decision guaranteeing the right of children of undocumented immigrants to a free, public education, remains settled law.

Still, public schools don't operate in a vacuum. They often feel the reverberations from government's attempts to "solve" an intricate and thorny social issue. Consequently, as more immigration reform laws are passed, district officials and educators in communities with large Hispanic populations face a new set of challenges that may fundamentally alter how they interact with students' families.

"Generally [schools] try their very best to be seen as a safe place where parents can feel comfortable [sending] their children every day," says Cullen Casey of the National School Boards Association.

The effects of overzealous immigration enforcement on schools, adds Casey—the disruptions in attendance, funding, and student learning—are "chilling."

Recent Census Report figures reveal the dramatic transformation of Oklahoma's population over the past seven years.

The number of Hispanic youths has increased by more than 32 percent since 2000, and by 2020, at least one in four children in Oklahoma will be Hispanic. In Tulsa, the Hispanic population stands at approximately 50,000—about 7 percent of the overall population.

"I was used to driving around in my car and never seeing anyone who looked like me," recalls Nilda Reyes, director of Equity and Diversity for Tulsa Public Schools. "In just a matter of a few years, I saw everything change."

So did conservative Oklahoma lawmaker Randy Terrill. But he saw the changing population as a root cause of economic problems and lawlessness. Believing it was up to the states to fill the void created by federal inaction on immigration reform, Terrill introduced the Oklahoma Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act—House Bill 1804—last January. The proposal moved swiftly through the legislature, and Gov. Brad Henry signed it into law in May, with an effective date of November 1, 2007.

Some longtime Oklahomans, however, insist that stoking fears over economic instability, border security, and crime often masks an uglier truth.

"People around here," says teacher Harriet Leake, "just don't want anybody brown or Catholic living anywhere near them. It's that simple." A self-described "ultra-conservative," Leake says House Bill 1804 is "mean-spirited and unconscionable."

"Make no mistake, I'm to the right of Attila the Hun," she says unapologetically. "But I'm also a Good Samaritan, and I don't understand why we can't share the bounty in this state." Leake has strong personal ties to several undocumented families and says some of her best students have come from those homes.

Throughout the summer and early fall, Leake looked to November 1 with trepidation. But she and her colleagues wouldn't have to wait that long to see the law's effect.

One of the largest elementary schools in Oklahoma, Kendall-

PHOTOS: MIKE SIMONS/TULSA WORLD

Members of Tulsa's Hispanic community rally against House Bill 1804 at the state Capitol in November.

Whittier's student population is roughly 55 percent Hispanic, 18 percent Caucasian, 12 percent Black, and 12 percent American Indian. Staff members speak proudly of the bonds they have cultivated with Hispanic students' parents. Tapping into these lines of communication, the staff was aware of the growing, widespread panic about House Bill 1804 and the probability that, come the first day of school, no-shows were inevitable.

Despite repeated assurances from local authorities that there were no such plans, rumors were rampant that school raids were imminent. Some parents called the school to say they were withdrawing their children and moving to Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, or California, or even heading back to Mexico.

Worried about the obvious strain the law had put on families in the neighborhood, Kendall-Whittier Principal Judy Feary and her staff were also deeply concerned about the fallout on their school.

"I was scared," Feary recalls. "If students didn't show up, I would lose teachers, and the students would fall behind." On top of that, Kendall-Whittier stood to lose funding for tutoring programs, and even the free lunch program was at risk.

Feary's concerns were realized on August 7, when almost 200 out of 1,000 students failed to show up on the first day of school.

Immediately, Feary and her staff jumped into action. Volunteering after school, teachers began telephoning parents one-by-one, while counselors and assistant principals knocked on the doors of absent students' homes to dispel rumors and calm nerves.

"We let the parents first tell us what was on their minds, what their fears were" teacher Monica Carrizalez explained. "They know us and trust us."

The message to parents was simple: You and your children are safe on school grounds. No one is going to arrest you and separate you from your children. By the end of the week, students began trickling back in and by late August, attendance neared 100 percent.

The efforts of Kendall-Whittier's staff, which were featured on the local news, seemed to reassure some parents; when the city's schools opened two weeks later, most of them reported virtually no absences. But some Tulsa residents sent Feary hate mail slamming

SCHOOLS CAN'T TURN AWAY UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

The recent frenzy of anti-immigrant xenophobia has produced a host of local ordinances aimed at ridding communities of "illegal aliens" and their children who attend public schools. Can they do that?

The jury is still out on the legality of local ordinances that punish businesses that hire undocumented workers and landlords who rent to them. A federal judge in Pennsylvania last summer struck down such a law. Generally, only the federal government has the power to regulate immigration.

But what about the children of undocumented workers: Can they be banned from public schools? On this issue, the law is crystal clear: In the 1982 landmark decision *Plyler v. Doe*, the U.S. Supreme Court decreed that state and local school districts cannot deny admission to undocumented immigrant children. To do so, the Court declared, would violate the constitutional right to Equal Protection and deny these children the "basic tools" necessary to make their way in life.

Because the *Plyler* decision is based on the federal Constitution, it is now the "law of the land." This means that neither Congress nor any state legislature nor any school board has the power to overrule the case and deny a free, public education to undocumented immigrant children. In 1994, for example, voters in California passed Proposition 187, a ballot initiative that would have prohibited "illegal aliens" from attending the state's public schools. A federal court

PHOTO THIS PAGE: ASSOCIATED PRESS; NEXT PAGE TOP: TOM GILBERT; BILLBOARD: JAMES GIBBARD/TULSAWORLD

her efforts to keep students enrolled. Feary concedes that some of her fellow Tulsans are unreachable, but she believes others might look on the issue differently if they could see what educators see.

"We are on the ground," Feary says. "We see the faces, the real people, not politics. We're lucky to have that perspective."

Focus on the child, not the politics, is advice echoed by Steve Joel, superintendent of Grand Island public schools in Nebraska.

Two weeks before Christmas 2006, immigration authorities raided the Swift meatpacking plant in his rural town of 45,000, carting away hundreds of employees. Swift plants in six states were under a long-reaching federal investigation for employing undocumented workers.

"We don't care what [a student's] immigration status is," says Tulsa teacher **Gracye McCoy**.

After receiving a tip-off that the raid was imminent, Joel immediately began coordinating plans to ensure the safety of the schools' students whose parents might be swept up in the action. He sent an urgent e-mail to school staff that an incident was under way that could profoundly affect students. Of the district's 7,000 children, more than 1,000 had parents employed at Swift.

The staff at Walnut Middle School assembled the student body in the gymnasium to deliver four important messages: 1) students' immigration status is of no interest to the school; 2) the only concern is the safety of the students; 3) notify a staff member if no one is at home; 4) if no one is home, the school will provide you with food and shelter.

Teachers and social workers volunteered to bring the students into their homes.

"No matter what," recalls counselor Mary Ann Richards. "We weren't going to let these kids go home alone. Of course, there are certain liability issues involved, but the teachers didn't care." As it turned out, students' relatives and other Hispanic families assisted by local churches provided the necessary care for any child who needed it.

The district's quick reaction helped avert a crisis, and officials succeeded in reassuring parents that schools were not a target.

Similar federal raids were conducted in Iowa, Minnesota, and Massachusetts, each one forcing school districts to make contingency plans on the fly. Actions like raids "present tremendous challenges to districts," explains Cullen Casey. "Children can be left without parents and may be left at school with no place to go."

By October 2007, educators at Kendall-Whittier hoped the pains they'd taken to alleviate the fears of undocumented families in August would keep their kids in school through the year.

But by the fall, some parents again began pulling their children out of school. Staff at Kendall-Whittier would look out the window and see parents pull up in trucks to pick up their sons or daughters on the way out of town. Longtime teachers would say goodbye to students who grew up in the neighborhood and were very much products of the Tulsa public school system.

"We were able to persuade most of them to return in August," says Carrizalez. "Now we know many are not coming back."

When House Bill 1804 finally went into effect in November, Judy Feary had already lost one teacher and expected to lose two more because of her school's declining enrollment. She also notes that the stress on students and their families led to a significant increase in referrals for counseling services. If enrollment continues to decline, the school could lose additional funding.

Despite the challenges and uncertainty, the staff at Kendall-Whittier hasn't lost sight of the school's mission.

"We have all types of students here and we treat all of them and their families the same," says Gracye McCoy. "We don't care what their immigration status is. We're about education. Any child that walks through that door is welcome." nea

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immediately declared the law unconstitutional under *Plyler*.

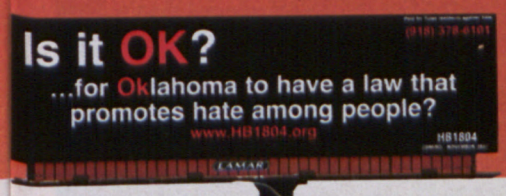
But can teachers be conscripted into the ranks of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) police and forced to verify the documented status of students who seek to enroll in school? The answer is no. That was one of the rulings of the California case involving Proposition 187.

More recently, a Hispanic advocacy group successfully challenged a suburban Chicago school district's refusal to register an undocumented student and then ran a series of public service announcements in Chicago reminding parents that school officials cannot ask students about their immigration status.

Undocumented students also have rights under federal laws, including NCLB, that prohibit schools from discriminating on the basis of national origin and that require schools to take affirmative steps to help English Language Learners (ELLs) overcome language barriers.

In response to a new business item adopted at the 2007 Representative Assembly, the NEA Office of General Counsel prepared a comprehensive memorandum titled "Immigration Status and the Right to a Free Public Education." The memorandum offers practical advice for NEA members who may confront some of the special problems of undocumented students and is available at www.nea.org/ref?immigration.

— MICHAEL D. SIMPSON
NEA Office of General Counsel



ALL HANDS ON DECK

Keep volunteers on board to lighten the load and motivate students.

BY TIM WALKER

Schools with thriving volunteer programs know that a volunteer's contributions can go far beyond relieving teachers of minor tasks (though help with the little things is much appreciated). Whether assisting teachers in classroom activities, helping out with long-term projects, leading small group activities, or instructing students one-on-one in a particular subject, dedicated volunteers can become valuable partners in the students' learning process.

The teachers we interviewed say the efforts they put into keeping volunteers engaged have obvious benefits—their students achieve higher grades, have better attendance and behavior, complete more homework, are more motivated to learn, and demonstrate a more positive attitude toward education.

Are you making the most of the time and talents that people from your community are willing to donate? Here's some advice from teachers who are.

Tap into their talents

Over the years, the pool of potential school volunteers has changed dramatically. No longer the exclusive domain of parents, now schools actively recruit people from the business community, retired citizens, and college students.

There are volunteers in all corners of the community who will give happily of their time to help local schools—especially when presented with a project that's compelling to them. Members of the business community, for example, are interested in shaping keen business minds for the future, and older Americans value the sense of helping the younger generation. (Check out "Math Buddies" on the opposite page to read about a school that invites businesspeople to help elementary students with math.)

Many workplaces encourage their employees to volunteer and have programs that schools can tap into. Deborah Finkenbeim, a literacy coach at King Elementary in Little Rock, Arkansas, works with 28 volunteers from the Arkansas Children's Hospital as part of Little Rock's Volunteering in Public Schools program.

"The volunteers who participate in our Reading Aloud Renaissance program come from many professional fields," says Finkenbeim. "We have graphic designers, lab technicians, office managers, and nurses. They all come in every week to read to a class for half an hour."

Other volunteers might help with activity preparations, read with individual students, tutor in math or language arts, or assist children with homework.

Organize and communicate

Stephanie Jones, in addition to being a special education teacher, is the volunteer coordinator at Love Grove Elementary in Jacksonville, Florida. In that capacity she's a liaison between the school faculty and volunteers, working with an average of 175 to 250 volunteers annually. Every year, she must first fill the roster of volunteers, which can be draining.

"You'll get responses like 'I don't have the time' or 'You have to call the corporate office,'" Jones says. But she says not to let rejections throw you off course and that "a positive attitude and presentation can have a great effect on prospective volunteers."

Once volunteers are on board, keeping the lines of communication open is crucial.

"I really try to get to know our volunteers on a personal basis," says Finkenbeim, "because it is important for them to feel comfortable if they ever have any questions concerning their assignments." Finkenbeim works with a coordinator who actually finds the volunteers, then she matches them up with the appropriate teacher. All the volunteers at King Elementary have her e-mail address, which allows them to stay in touch every day.

The educators we spoke to offer the following advice on key ways that classroom educators can build a stronger relationship with volunteers:

CONDUCT orientation and training sessions

ALWAYS provide clear instructions and explain expectations

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VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?VOLUNTEER TO SHARE IDEAS ON WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS IN YOUR CLASSROOM.

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID CLARK; PHOTO: CRAIG MITCHELLDYER

to volunteers

MAKE sure the volunteer is comfortable with the academic task

TRY TO strike the right balance between guiding and helping the volunteer and empowering them to try their own ideas.

Reap the benefits

Different volunteer groups bring different talents and expertise and different, equally valuable, results. School staff witness, for example, how parent volunteers, with their deeper understanding of families and their needs, can significantly improve school ties to the students' families. Stronger communication with parents through a volunteering program can also create more valuable parent-teacher conferences and a better understanding of different types of families and cultural backgrounds.

Schools in Maryland have seen firsthand the benefits of their senior citizen volunteer program. A 2005 study by the University of Maryland revealed that in schools where older Americans were a regular fixture, reading scores went up and administrators reported fewer behavioral problems than at other schools.

Deborah Finkenbeim sees two significant effects volunteers from community organizations have on her students. "One of the best things about our program is that our volunteers stress to our students the importance of getting out in the community and making it a better place. And the students' joy and love of reading has gone up dramatically!"

Math Buddies

FACED WITH FLAGGING MATH RESULTS, Martin Luther King Elementary in Vancouver, Washington, partnered with volunteers from high-tech industries, banks, and other businesses to initiate the Math Buddies volunteer program in the spring of 2007. The idea is that bringing engineers, accountants, and business executives—people who use math every day—into the classroom to work with students instills a sense of fun into the subject.

One day a week, the volunteers visit the school and meet one-on-one with students in grades 3, 4, and 5 to play research-based math games.

"We give [volunteers] information about the math concepts we're working on at the time," says fourth-grade teacher Julie Spencer. "Last spring we utilized the Math Buddies primarily for multiplication strategies, as that was the greatest area of support my students needed."

Adds third-grade teacher Sonja Nevin: "I'll meet with the volunteer and share the math areas his or her 'buddy' needs help with at that time. If the volunteer has any questions or concerns, we will come up with a plan to help the student."

Although the program is still in its infancy, teachers at King Elementary are already seeing a difference in student confidence and improvement in math skills.

"The program works because the students really enjoy having the relationship with the adult," explains Spencer. To track progress, all volunteers fill out an information sheet letting the teacher know what was accomplished during tutoring time and how well the student performed the tasks.

Staff at King Elementary are excited that the Math Buddies program may become a model for other schools. After the program was touted at a recent principals meeting, the Vancouver school district is exploring ways to bring Math Buddies to other schools in the area.

Sonja Nevin works with a Math Buddies volunteer and two students.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

With student safety a paramount concern in all schools, any unknown person coming into the building must be viewed as a potential threat—including volunteers.

AT STEPHANIE JONES' SCHOOL IN JACKSONVILLE, background checks are conducted on volunteers when they start and then every two years thereafter, required under Florida law. All prospective volunteers complete a form that gets sent to the district Community Involvement Department where the background check is conducted. Every volunteer coordinator in Florida also receives Predator Updates from the state attorney's office.

Elsewhere, many districts that are considering implementing such a policy express concerns that background checks might deter would-be volunteers and that the information provided by applicants would become public record. Still, background checks, whether mandated at the state or district level, are a modern-day reality for many school volunteers.

bulletin board

BEST BOARDS

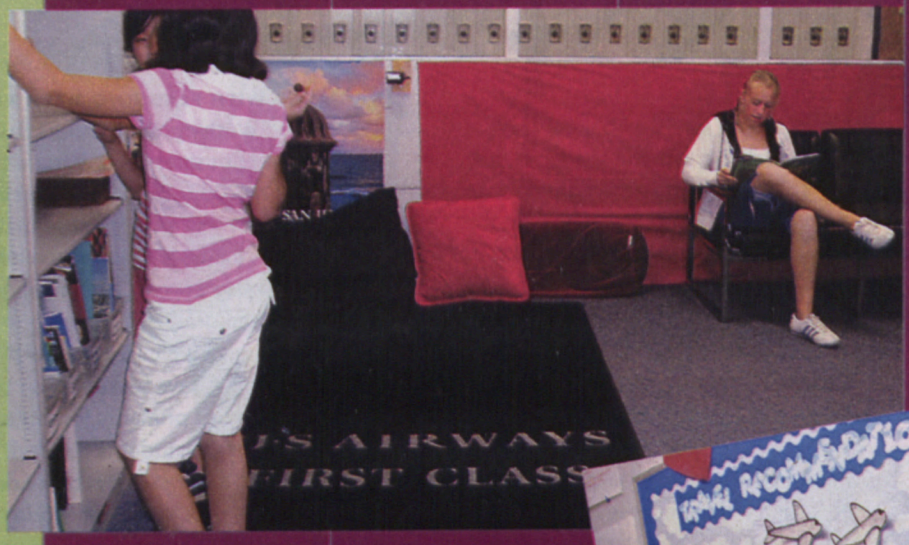
Each year I decorate my classroom with a new theme. This year I turned it into an airport. I wrote a request to airlines and was given several fantastic items (including airline posters and ticket counter and gate paraphernalia). My students and I "fly" to different locations, based on the setting of what we are reading. My class helpers are my co-pilots or flight attendants, and I work in other fun connections to the travel theme.

Our students have to sign out and in any time they leave the room using a log book that says "Arrivals and Departures." I have a sign that says "Gate E4" to match my room number. And I play airplane and airport sound effects on a computer at appropriate moments in class. For example, a "ding" signals that students can "take off their seatbelts" and move around, go pick up materials, or begin work.

Many students and adults have asked me how I got the items and are very surprised that the airport gave them to me. I've been telling people, "You never know unless you ask!" Several people at the airport were more than happy to help. I think it gave them a break in their routine and they were excited about the idea of contributing something to a classroom.

At Back to School Night, one parent walked in the room and said, "We have heard all about the airport!"

KIM HOLLINGSWORTH
Sixth-grade reading teacher
Ellicott City, Maryland



Go the extra mile:

ONE WAY to let students know it is time to return to their seats is to say, "The fasten seatbelt light is on."

YOU CAN get their attention or begin a direction by saying, "This is your captain speaking."

YOU COULD use passports as a reward system. Students get stamps for targeted behaviors and earn rewards after so many stamps in their passport.

TOP TIPS

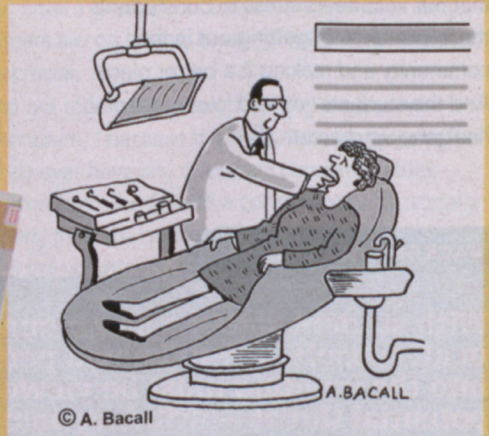
...For Getting Organized in the New Year

I GIVE MY STUDENTS A COPY of the objective for each lesson. My objectives are written in the following format: "By the time you finish class today you will be able to...." Each objective is followed by one or two supporting facts that will be covered in the lesson. When it comes time to study for the tests, students use these sheets as review tools.

SUSAN DOLLOFF, Sixth-grade science teacher, Mexico, Maine

I STARTED LETTING my high school science classes know what we would be doing each day of the present week. I type up a Monday through Friday list and briefly include what's on tap each day—experiments, quizzes, test, when homework is due. They know what to expect and are more readily prepared each day.

JOHN BROVARONE, High school science teacher, Ravenna, Ohio



© A. Bacall

"I have a waiting room filled with people that have different needs and don't want to be here. You're a teacher. You wouldn't know how stressful that is."

BEST BOARDS: KIM HOLLINGSWORTH; CARTOON: A. BACALL; GIRL WITH BEAKER: ANDERSON ROSS

MR. WOODHEAD © 2002 by John P. Wood
MY RESEARCH PROJECT IS GOING TO BE ABOUT EIGHT DAYS LATE.
THAT PROJECT ISN'T EVEN DUE FOR THREE WEEKS.
I KNOW. ISN'T IT GREAT HOW I'VE LEARNED TO PLAN AHEAD?

Got a classroom question that your colleagues could help with?

Send your queries about lesson plans, tackling discipline problems, or anything else to: **ckopkowski@nea.org**.

We'll post the question on the Works4Me discussion board and print the most helpful tips.

COLLEAGUES' HELPDESK

How do you keep order in your classroom?

ANSWER: I created a "noise thermometer" that looks like a three-foot thermometer with red Velcro that acts as the mercury. I number increments from zero (no noise) to 10 (extreme noise/out of control). The thermometer starts at zero each morning. When my class gets louder, I raise the thermometer to a level that matches their noise level. I never have to say a word. They see me near it and the room immediately becomes quieter! If it hits five, the class loses two minutes of recess time, and as it is raised even higher, they lose more minutes.

SUSAN REICH
Rangely, Colorado

ANSWER: I use my cell phone to help me with disruptive students. When a problem occurs, I just call any number and push the clear button. The students think I pressed the send button. I pretend that I am talking to their parents. You should see the expressions on their faces!

NIKKI SHEFFIELD
Dublin, Georgia

ANSWER: I teach the children to copycat movement patterns, saying "do what I do" while moving my arms up and down, patting my head, touching my nose, etc. Initially I do one movement, and then switch movements about every five seconds. Later, I will do a pattern of movements. Children need to watch and tend to stop talking as they concentrate on imitating. I praise children for copying quietly. In addition to getting their attention, this gives them a simple movement break, and if I combine activities that cross and uncross the midline, it helps their sensory systems and improves their thinking skills.

JANET SHLEGLE
Loveville, Maryland

ANSWER: I have green, yellow, and red discipline cards on a chart for each student. At the beginning of the day, each student has a green card showing on the chart. If a child is disruptive, he or she is told to pull their green card as a warning and the yellow card is exposed. After the yellow card is pulled, the child is given a five-minute time-out. After the red card is pulled, the time-out is 10 minutes. If the bad behavior continues, the child is sent to the school reflection room to talk to the educational assistant about how he or she can better handle a situation. Once a reflection sheet is satisfactorily completed, the child may return to class. Few students have to pull more than their green card before remembering to stay on task.

LOLITA COX
Sixth-grade teacher
St. Paul, Minnesota

ANSWER: I use a small plastic bucket to address the issue of tattling. I decorate the bucket with a sad face, a nose, eyes, and some big ears. After I discuss tattling with the class, I tell my students that if they want to tattle, they must write their concern on a piece of paper and place it in Mr. Bucket. This has been a great help in stopping the tattling because kids don't get my attention. Later, I read what is placed in Mr. Bucket and then decide if anything needs to be addressed.

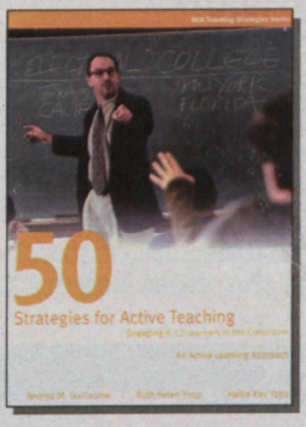
KIRK VER HALEN
Third-grade teacher
Dallas, Texas

CARTOON: JOHN F. WOOD; TEACHER WITH CELL PHONE: TEACEPT; THERMOMETER: C SQUARED STUDIOS; DEWAYNE FLOWERS, NOISE BACKGROUND; RED CARD: TOBIAS TITZ

NEED A FEW GREAT APPROACHES TO CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION?

NEW!

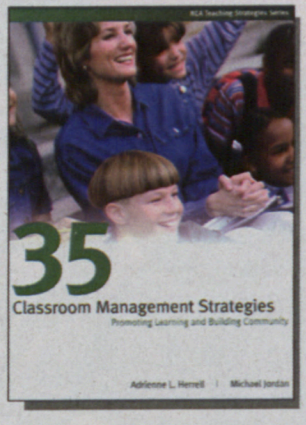
Here are 135 Designed Just for You!



50 Strategies for Active Teaching: Engaging K-12 Learners in the Classroom

Provide a challenging classroom environment for your students by giving them a sense of ownership with their own learning. Fifty strategies are covered in this 263-page book, including: lesson preparation, implementation, alternatives and time allotment. Also includes 32 printable resource templates on CD-ROM.

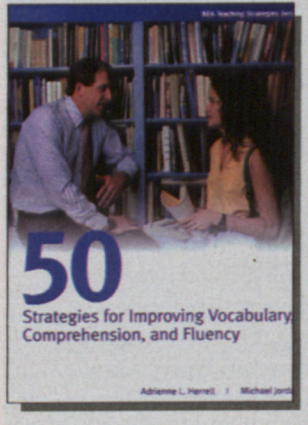
Non-Member Price: $21.95 + S&H
Member Price: $19.95 + S&H
Item #0694-1-00-NT108



35 Classroom Management Strategies: Promoting Learning and Building Community

Get practical–and effective–strategies for creating a classroom community conducive to learning. See 12 real-life examples on the accompanying DVD.

Non-Member Price: $21.95 + S&H
Member Price: $19.95 + S&H
Item #0693-3-00-NT108



50 Strategies for Improving Vocabulary Comprehension and Fluency

This 246-page second edition offers strategies that work to improve reading skills at all levels, K-12, including English Language Learners. Find two examples for each strategy–one in the text and the other on the accompanying CD.

Non-Member Price: $29.95 + S&H
Member Price: $25.95 + S&H
Item #0692-5-00-NT108

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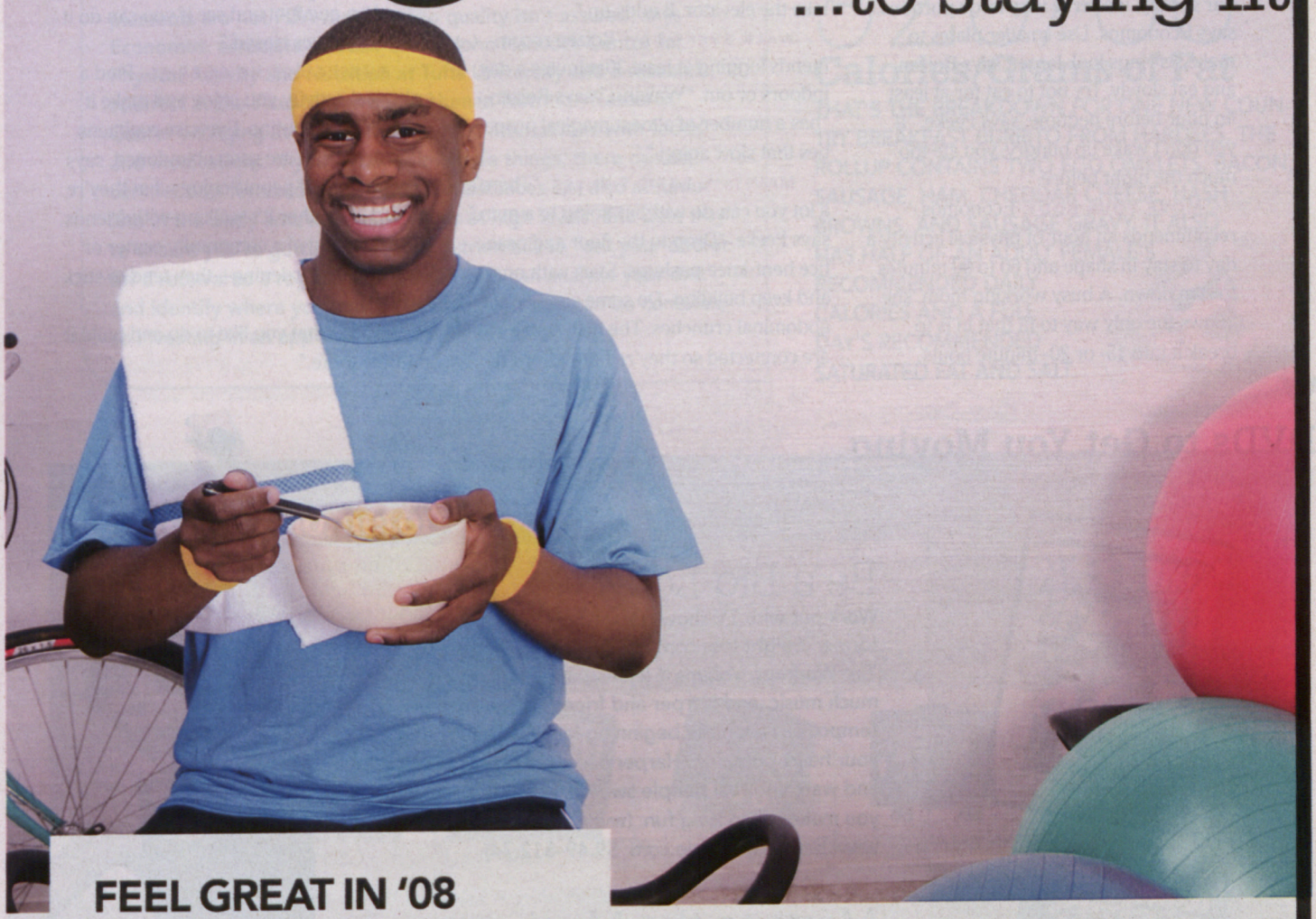


PHOTO: MEIKO ARQUILLOS

FEEL GREAT IN '08

Staying fit and eating right at any age

BY GINI KOPECKY WALLACE

It's never too soon or late to replace bad health habits with good ones or swear off diet and fitness fads in favor of principles that work. Whatever your age, the habits you form now will pay dividends or take their toll later. Here are some strategies experts endorse.

MEASURE YOUR MIDDLE. Waist size is a more important indicator of health than weight or body-mass index, says Michael Roizen, M.D., chief wellness officer at the Cleveland Clinic and co-author of *You: Staying Young*. "Fat around the abdomen is different than fat on your arms or legs," he says. "It's metabolically active fat that can cause inflammation in the arteries and immune system." Women want to keep their waist below 37 inches; men, below 40. (The ideal is 32.5 inches for women and 37 for men.)

EAT REGULARLY. "When you go more than 20 hours without eating, your body goes into starvation mode and decreases metabolism by about 30 percent, which makes it much tougher to lose weight," says Roizen. Eating regularly—every three to four hours—keeps metabolism going and prevents overeating. Says Pamela Peeke, M.D., clinical assistant professor of Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and author of *Body for Life for Women*: "Spread protein throughout the day to prevent carb cravings."

EAT WISELY. "Eat more whole foods—whole fruits and vegetables, whole grains, brown rice, good oils, nuts, and seeds," says Christina Economos, associate director of the John Hancock Center for Physical Activity and Nutrition at Tufts University. Read labels, says Roizen, and avoid processed foods that list any of these ingredients among the first five: animal fats; palm or coconut oil; hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils; enriched flour or other non-whole grains; dextrose, sucrose, glucose, and other "-ose" sugars; or malt, maple, or corn syrup, which are also sugars.

REDUCE PORTIONS. The USDA

Food Guide Pyramid counts one slice of bread, one half cup of pasta, and one ounce of beef as a serving-size of each. "In our society, we serve very large portions," says Economos. Use smaller plates to make servings look larger, says Roizen, and eat slowly. Try not to eat for at least an hour before bedtime, says Peeke. "If you don't wake up hungry, you ate too much the night before."

MOVE YOUR BODY. Economos recommends an hour of physical activity a day to stay in shape and 60 to 90 minutes to slim down. A busy working mom, she knows the only way to fit that in is to break it into 15- or 20- minute bouts. "Corny strategies of getting off the bus a stop early or taking the stairs—I do that. Unless it's above the sixth floor, I never take the elevator. It adds up."

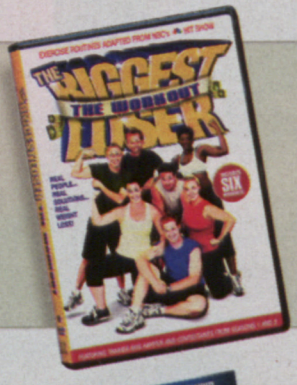
WALK EVERY DAY. Roizen recommends logging at least 30 minutes a day, indoors or out. "Walking," says Roizen, "has a number of almost magical properties that slow aging."

MAINTAIN BASIC FITNESS. "There's a lot you can do without going to a gym," says Peeke. "Drop to the floor and practice bent-knee pushups. Start with one and keep building. Do some simple abdominal crunches. The belly and back are connected so they're both affected. For flexibility, get a yoga DVD, pick two or three exercises you like, and start with that. For balance, a simple thing to do is stand on one foot and see if you can do it with your eyes closed."

PURSUE ACTIVE HOBBIES. Find a physical activity you enjoy and make it part of your routine. Exercise regimens that aren't fun are soon abandoned, says Economos. "If people enjoy what they're doing—whether it's walking with friends or exercising at a community center or dancing or gardening—they tend to stick with it.

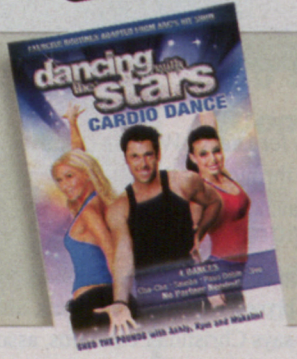
"Find what you like to do and build it into your life."

DVDs to Get You Moving



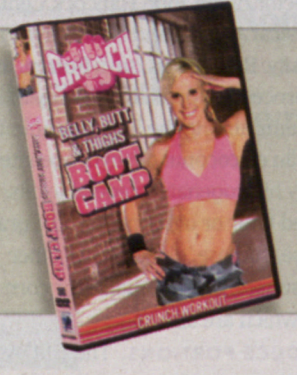
Be a Big Loser

Work out with TV-show trainer Bob Harper and former weight-loss contestants on *The Biggest Loser: The Workout, Volume 1* (Lionsgate, 2005). There's not much music, and Harper and friends often change tempo. But even the beginning-level workout gets your heart pumping, Harper has a great personality, and watching real people sweat and strain along with you makes exercising fun. (www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com, $9.49–$12.74)



Move to the Music

Spiff up your Cha-Cha, Samba, Paso Doble and Jive skills with TV dance instructors on *Dancing with the Stars Cardio Dance* (Lionsgate, 2007). Dancers Ashly, Kym, and Maksim sometimes teach steps too quickly, and following combinations may leave you stumbling. But you'll learn real steps and moves while working out and feel like you're grooving, not exercising. (www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com, $11.99)



Whittle Your Waist

Tighten and tone common trouble spots with *Crunch: Belly, Butt & Thighs Boot Camp* (Starz, 2007). Instructor Teri Ann Krefting keeps the pace going, takes time to teach each exercise, offers four levels of exertion for each move, and cues combinations so you don't get lost. (www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com, $12.99–$14.99)

AEROBICS PHOTO: GEORGE DOYLE

Supplements... Yes or No?

Taking a daily multivitamin can be wise, but unless you're pregnant, elderly, or have other distinct supplemental needs, Christina Economos cautions against taking much else. Vitamins and supplements are not FDA-regulated so quality isn't assured, says Economos, associate director of the John Hancock Center for Physical Activity and Nutrition at Tufts University and a research scientist at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts. "There can be interactions with foods and medications. If you're taking multiple things, there can be competition for absorption." Some substances can also accumulate in the body and/or be dangerous at high levels. The best way to ensure you're getting adequate nutrients is to "ask your doctor for a referral to a registered dietician who can analyze your diet and identify where you may be lacking. Nutrition can be complex, so investing in an appointment can be worth it."

920/60

Calories/Grams of Fat

THAT'S THE BREAKDOWN FOR ONE NEW COUNTRY BREAKFAST BURRITO FROM HARDEES. THE ROLLUP CONTAINS TWO EGG OMELETS, BACON, SAUSAGE, HAM, CHEDDAR CHEESE, HASH BROWNS, AND SAUSAGE GRAVY. IT ALSO HAS HALF OF AN ADULT FEMALE'S RECOMMENDED DAILY CALORIES AND A FULL DAY'S RECOMMENDED SATURATED FAT AND SALT.

Picking a Pedometer

Experts recommend walking up to 10,000 steps a day. Attached to a belt or waistband, pedometers help you track your progress. Scott Crouter, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Exercise and Health Science at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, has done numerous studies on pedometer accuracy. He comments on five models:

	YAMAX DIGI-WALKER SW 200	FREESTYLE PACER PRO	SPORTLINE FITNESS PRO 360	NEW LIFESTYLE NL-2000	OMRON HEALTH-CARE HJ-112
Cost	$18.90–$19.95	$16.99–$23.99	$26.99–$39.99	$55–$59.95	$27.95–$35.99
Measures	Step-counter only	Steps, distance, calories, speed	Steps, distance, calories, speed, exercise time	Steps, calories burned	steps, aerobic steps, distance, calories
Description	Spring mechanism. Small, quiet, reliable count. Used in studies by Crouter. Flip-cover protects buttons. Accuracy affected by girth and pedometer tilt. Other models offer more functions. http://RYPsports.com; www.new-lifestyles.com	Spring mechanism. Compact. Two-line display, scroll function, 12-hour clock, sleep function, flip-cover. Rated reliable by one tester but found to undercount steps by Crouter. Accuracy affected by girth and pedometer tilt. http://RYPsports.com	Spring mechanism. Small, quiet. Two-line display. 24-hour clock, seven-day memory. Separate walk and run modes. Scrolling and sleep functions, flip cover. Accuracy affected by girth and pedometer tilt. Other models offer more features. www.sportsauthority.com	Uses accelerometer technology for more accurate step and calorie measurement. Small, light-weight, silent. Unaffected by girth or pedometer tilt in studies by Crouter. Seven-day memory, metal clip. www.new-lifestyles.com	Accelerometer accuracy. Tracks exercise separately from daily activity. Seven-day memory, 24-hour clock. Can be worn in different ways, not just at waist. Other models offer more functions, including data upload. http://RYPsports.com
Dr. Crouter says	"For cost effectiveness and counting steps in normal-weight individuals, this is probably the best one to get."	"Some people like these extra features, but pedometers are best at counting steps, less accurate at measuring distance and energy."	"The Freestyle and Sportline aren't as durable or accurate as the Digiwalker, but the feedback still helps. You'll know when you need to walk [more]."	"The gold standard. Accelerometers measure more accurately for all body sizes and at slower walking speeds. They also measure... energy expenditure."	"This pedometer shouldn't be affected by body size, but I don't know if that's been studied. Make sure you get a model with an accelerometer."
Our panel says	"It's an idiot-proof setup. The counting mechanism is quite sensitive though, and a little jostle registered as steps walked."	"It does its job well, but changing the settings is slightly complicated and opening the front cover is difficult."	"The numbers are very easy to read. The clip for attaching it to the belt is very light, so it frequently ends up on the ground."	"A little tricky to open, and it gave me credit for extra steps! I liked the way it automatically updated my daily step-counts."	"Nice design that departs from the standard little black box of most pedometers. Easy to set up and read."

SUNBURST PHOTO: MARILYN VOLAN; PEDOMETERS: FROM WEBSITES MENTIONED

Andrew Mogle

NORWALK, IOWA

Professional chef and restaurant manager turned high school culinary arts teacher and "owner" of the student-run Warrior Café

What inspired you to start cooking?
I grew up with five brothers. If you were late for dinner and hungry, you needed to learn how to cook. My mom taught me that life was full of challenges and feeding myself was going to be one.

Biggest disaster in the kitchen?
Running the blender full of milkshake makings without putting the lid on tight.

If you could cook alongside one big-name chef, who would it be?
I have already lived this dream. I got to work with Julia Child in Dallas.

What's more stressful—the dinner rush or the post-class bell rush?
I have never been trampled by hungry customers.

***Top Chef* or *Hell's Kitchen*?**
Top Chef is more realistic. If [*Hell's Kitchen*'s] Gordon Ramsay actually talked to his employees like he does on television, he would be a very poor man.

What's your favorite dish to prepare?
Anything seafood.

What's the key to tackling culinary lessons with high school students?
Harnessing their excitement for the food lab. They want to create more than they want to study sometimes.

Are there benefits of teaching students to cook, beyond just the culinary lessons?
I tell them all the time: They are using math that counts. If they get these fractions wrong, they still have to eat the results. Also, teamwork and cooperation. The skills they learn here will help them survive after mom and dad ask them to leave home.

Why did you decide to become an NEA member?
I give kids sharp knives and fire. Seems like a no-brainer. I also understand the need for the support and structure NEA provides its members.

Get the recipe for the Warrior Café's bread pudding with rum sauce—the restaurant's most requested dessert—at www.nea.org/ref?breadpudding.

Diane Albanese

LEWES, DELAWARE

Middle school English teacher, education news columnist for the local paper and NPR radio affiliate

Why did you start doing column-writing and radio?
To reach parents and the community. To tell our stories.

Do people tell you that you have a great radio voice?
Sometimes. It's a teacher voice!

What's more daunting—news deadlines or new lesson plans?
Lesson plans. I'm always reaching for better material.

Where do your column and radio show ideas come from?
Life, my classroom. A good writer is a good observer.

What's your dream newspaper or radio gig?
Traveling the country recording teacher stories, publishing them, and requiring decision-makers read them before allocating funds.

Why did you decide to become an NEA member?
NEA is the best thing I can do to support and help improve the profession that I love.

See Albanese's newspaper columns and radio commentary at http://dalbanese.edublogs.org.

SHORT TAKES

Mozell Robinson

BRATTONSVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

Storyteller

Whether it's a kindergarten classroom, a senior citizen center, a college campus, or a historic plantation, each site is home for Robinson's mix of traditional African-American folktales and personal stories. "Every one of my stories conveys a message to the audience and a lesson about African-American culture," says Robinson, an SCEA-Retired member who retired in 1994 after 38 years of teaching. "I try to get my audience intimately involved with my characters through the use of props and costumes and a variety of voices."

When you look back on 2008, what do you want to say? "I got healthier."—52%; "I socked a little money away."—18%; "I found more time for hobbies."—15%; "I fell in love all over again."—14%; "I learned how to program my TiVo and stop my cell phone from beeping."—2%. *Head to www.neatoday.org to vote in February's poll:* **Which notable would you like to have coffee with during Black History Month?**

PEOPLE POLL

PHOTOS TOP: STEVE POPE; BOTTOM LEFT: PAT CROWE; RIGHT: SUSIE FRIERSON PRICE

resources

52 **Grants & Awards** The Alan Shepard Technology in Education Award recognizes outstanding contributions in aeronautics and aerospace education.

53 **Take Note** The low-down on staph infections and how to prevent them.

54 **Transition to Digital TV Broadcasting** Get free government coupons to help offset the cost of an analog-to-digital converter box.

54 **On the Web** Free online professional development workshops for teachers of Native American and Alaska Native students.

55 **Diversity Calendar** January 1–3 is the Japanese New Year.

55 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** Gearing up to do your taxes? We've got some great options for you from H&R Block.

56 **On TV** Stem cell research—a human face on a thorny and far-reaching issue.

56 **Books by NEA Members** A little girl arrives in the United States and struggles to understand and be understood.

58 **NEA's Commitment to Diversity in Leadership** Plus a note about a potential vacancy.

Deadline Approaching for the NEA Foundation's February Grant Review

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY FEBRUARY 1, 2008, FOR BOTH STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRANTS AND LEARNING & LEADERSHIP GRANTS

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRANTS provide $5,000 to improve the academic achievement of students by engaging them in critical thinking and problem-solving that deepens their knowledge of standards-based subject matter.

THE NEA FOUNDATION
www.neafoundation.org

LEARNING & LEADERSHIP GRANTS provide opportunities for teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff to engage in high-quality professional development and lead their colleagues in professional growth. The grant amount is $2,000 for individuals and $5,000 for groups engaged in collegial study. Recipients will be notified by March 15, 2008. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the award date.

For information, including guidelines and applications, visit **www.neafoundation.org** or call **(202) 822-7840**.

A TOUCH OF CLASS

CLASS Grants are the NEA Student Program's answer for building community support for public education and addressing educational and social problems facing communities. CLASS Grants of up to $1,000 have funded local efforts by student chapters to:

HOST a book drive
CONDUCT a fund-raiser for school supplies and materials
OFFER after-school tutoring
WORK with a center for at-risk children
PARTICIPATE in adult-learning programs
SUPPORT Big Brothers-Big Sisters of America Inc.
AND much more!

Go to **www.nea.org/student-program/programs/class.html** and tell us how your chapter would like to make a difference in the community—you could be the recipient of our next CLASS grant!

Second-semester applications are due by **January 31, 2008**.

NEA FRIEND OF EDUCATION AWARD

The Friend of Education Award is NEA's highest honor and may be bestowed on an individual or organization whose leadership acts or support have significantly benefited education, education employees, or students on a national scale. This year, the deadline to nominate candidates is **March 31, 2008**. Nomination letters must include:

NAME of the nominee
NOMINEE'S position and/or organizational affiliation
NOMINEE'S mailing address (or organization mailing address)
NAME of the nominator or affiliate
SIGNATURE of nominator or affiliate officer
NAME of nominator's local affiliate, if applicable
NOMINATOR'S mailing address and telephone number.

If the nominator is an NEA member, send proof of membership (e.g., an *NEA Today* mailing label with membership number). In 100 words or less, indicate the reason for your nomination and summarize the nominee's qualifications for the award. Nominees will be evaluated based on leadership, acts, and support of education on a national scale. Supporting materials, such as publications or videos, may be submitted along with the nomination information.

Submit all nomination information and materials to:
NEA Friend of Education Award Committee
Attn: Yolanda Taylor, Executive Office
National Education Association
1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

GRANTS RECOGNIZE QUALITY IN SCHOOL–COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The American Society for Quality (ASQ) invites educators from across the country who have instituted or will institute a community-focused quality improvement initiative in their K–12 schools to apply for the Community Good Works grant.

The grants support engagement of communities in the success of their schools and provide financial support and ASQ member expertise to help schools and non-profit organizations improve operations and performance by using quality management principles.

Grant applications are now being accepted for the 2007–08 year, and the Community Good Works initiative seeks to fund up to eight projects that achieve the following:

THEY IMPROVE communities through the use of quality tools and technologies

THEY PROVIDE evidence documenting the efficacy of quality in improving communities

THEY ENGAGE ASQ members in improvement projects

THEY PROVIDE long-term benefit to the community.

There is no deadline to submit applications, however, applications will be accepted as long as program funding is available. To find out more and read about past recipients, visit **www.asq.org/communities/good-works/index.html**. Note that registration is free, but required, to navigate the site.

CALLING YOUNG ECO-HEROES

Action For Nature (AFN) has created the International Young Eco-Hero Awards to recognize and reward successful individual environmental initiatives of young people ages 8–16. The program encourages youth to "take personal action to nurture and protect a healthy environment on which all life depends." Winners receive a cash prize and certificate, as well as public recognition at AFN's Web site and elsewhere.

Applications will be judged on originality, difficulty, organization, length of time devoted to the project, influencing/educating others, use of outside resources (e.g., library, experts, media, community leaders), degree of success in reaching goals, and impact on the environment. For full contest requirements and an application, go to **www.actionfornature.org/eco-hero/index.html**. Completed applications must be mailed to Action for Nature by **February 28, 2008**.

Teaching Research Spotlight

If you're interested in what the research says about your profession, visit NEA's online venue highlighting professional research on best practices in educational issues.

January's focus is on **Teacher Working Conditions**

Learn more at www.nea.org/ref?janresearch

ALAN SHEPARD TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION AWARD

The Astronauts Memorial Foundation (AMF), in partnership with the Space Foundation and NASA, is accepting applications for the 2008 Alan Shepard Technology in Education Award. The award, which gives priority to programs focusing on aerospace and/or aeronautics, recognizes outstanding contributions made by technology personnel or K–12 classroom teachers to technology education, specifically in development and delivery of technology programs. Applicants must demonstrate how their programs ultimately benefit the students in a school or district.

The award is open to all U.S. K–12 school or district level educators and will be presented by AMF, the Space Foundation, and NASA at the 24th National Space Symposium in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in April 2008. Candidates must be nominated by their schools' principals. An associate superintendent or superintendent must nominate district level personnel. Only mailed applications received no later than **January 17, 2008,** will be accepted. For information, go to **www.amfcse.org/Alan%20Shepard%20Award/alan_shepard_award.htm**.

'LISTEN TO A LIFE' ESSAY CONTEST

Get students thinking about their life goals and building closer connections across generations with this inspirational contest. To participate, a student 8–18 years old interviews a grandparent or "grandfriend" 50 years or older about his or her hopes and goals through life, how he or she achieved those goals and overcame obstacles, or how dreams may have changed along the way. The student then writes and submits a 300-word essay based on the interview.

The Grand Prize is a Lenovo ThinkCentre computer, $800 in Orchard software, and an iPod Classic with video from Orchard Software. The school of the winning student also receives $25,000 in Orchard educational software. Twenty runner-up prizes include $400 in Orchard software and an iPod Shuffle from Orchard Software. All winners also receive a copy of *Dream* by Susan V. Bosak.

For complete contest details, ideas for interviewing, and a free online activity kit, visit **www.legacyproject.org/contests/ltal.html**. The deadline to submit an essay is **March 31, 2008**.

PHOTOS FROM TOP: GETTY IMAGES; BOB SMITH

Take Note

JANUARY IS CERVICAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Nearly 11,000 new cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed in the United States each year—but women can protect themselves and their families:

GET REGULAR PAP TESTS. These tests are used to detect the presence of abnormal cells that can lead to cervical cancer. In addition to the Pap, health care providers may recommend an HPV test for women over age 30 or who have a borderline abnormal Pap test. Pledge to prevent cervical cancer and get a personal reminder to schedule an annual exam at **www.cervicalcancercampaign.org**.

GET THE HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV) VACCINE. The HPV virus is the leading cause of cervical cancer. The Centers for Disease Control recommend routine HPV vaccination for 11- to 12-year-old girls and also for 13- to 26-year-old girls and women who have not yet received the vaccine. A second HPV vaccine, which may be used to protect women older than 26, could receive FDA approval as early as January 2008. Since these vaccines will not prevent all types of HPV infections that could lead to cancer, it is still important for women to get regular Pap tests even if they have been vaccinated. Learn more at **www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/hpv-vaccine.pdf**.

GET THE WORD OUT TO FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES. In 2007, at least 17 states enacted bills related to HPV vaccination (usually to fund vaccinations for un- and underinsured adults or to educate the public). Most other states at least introduced bills. In Missouri, a large private investment is funding vaccination for all 9- to 26-year-old females in the state who are unable to afford it. To see how the Missouri NEA, as part of the Missouri HPV Education Coalition, is helping to spread the word, visit **www.mohpv.org**. For more information, send an e-mail to Sara Jacobson at **sjacobson@nea.org** or Jamie Ekatomatis at **jekatomatis@nea.org** with the NEA Health Information Network.

MAYO CLINIC OFFER

The Mayo Clinic is offering its new publication, *Mayo Clinic Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy*, at a discounted rate to NEA members. This title provides readers with a thorough reference on pregnancy and childbirth, including a month-by-month look at baby and mom. Compiled by Mayo Clinic experts in obstetrics and family medicine, this in-depth guide to pregnancy and birth gives practical information and reassurance to expectant mothers.

Visit the Mayo Clinic bookstore at **http://bookstore.mayoclinic.com** to order. Enter the following code at checkout to receive a 20 percent discount: NEAHIN.

5 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP PREVENT STAPH INFECTIONS

Recently, cases of students being diagnosed with a virulent staph infection known as *methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus*—MRSA for short—have made national headlines. MRSA killed one Virginia student last fall.

"Staph" are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of otherwise healthy people. Staph is one of the most common causes of skin infection in the United States and can cause more serious infections, such as pneumonia and bloodstream infections. MRSA is a type of staph that resists treatment by antibiotics.

The NEA Health Information Network, along with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Soap and Detergent Association (SDA) are working together to raise awareness of the steps that communities can take to combat the spread of staph infections. To help prevent an outbreak of drug-resistant staph infection in your school, these groups recommend the following precautions:

WASH hands with soap and water several times daily
KEEP surfaces clean, especially school desks and cafeteria tables
WASH athletic uniforms regularly
COVER open cuts and wounds
SEE a physician if you have a fever or other serious symptoms.

For more about staph and what school staff can do to stop the spread of infection, visit **www.neahin.org**. The CDC's Web site, **www.cdc.gov/MRSA**, and the SDA Web site, **www.cleaning101.com**, also provide helpful background information.

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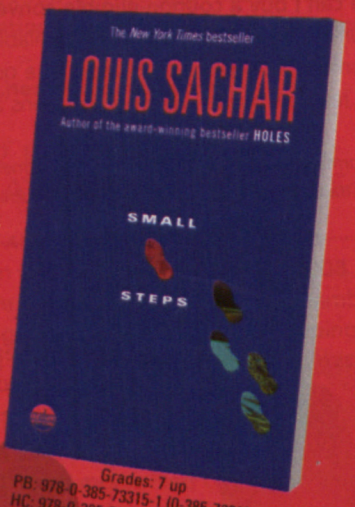

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For *Small Steps* and *Holes* discussion guides, visit **www.randomhouse.com/teachers**

Consumer Q&A:

Transition to Digital Broadcasting

On January 1, 1954, NBC broadcast the first coast-to-coast color television program showing the Tournament of Roses Parade. More than 50 years later, the next leap in technology will occur on **February 17, 2009**, when full-power television broadcasters make the switch from analog to all-digital broadcasting. To help the public continue receiving free, over-the-air television after this date, the federal government has created the *Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program*.

Why is television changing from current technology to digital?
The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 requires broadcasters to make the switch. Digital television provides a clearer picture and more programming, and does it more efficiently using less of the airwaves. Also, digital broadcasting will free up some airwaves for firefighters and police to better communicate during emergencies and will allow consumers access to next-generation wireless services.

What happens on the February 17, 2009, transition date?
Households that currently receive free television programming over the air using "rabbit ears" or rooftop antennas must take action to continue reception after February 17, 2009.

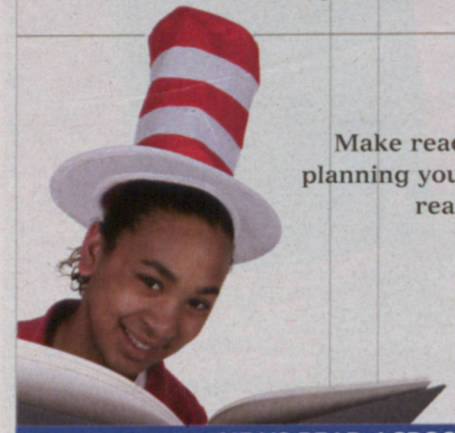
Viewers will need to either:

PURCHASE a device called a "digital-to-analog converter box";
SUBSCRIBE to cable or satellite service; or
PURCHASE a television with a digital tuner.

How can I obtain a coupon toward purchasing an eligible converter box?
All households in the United States and its territories are eligible to request coupons on a first-come, first-served basis. A maximum of two $40 coupons per household will be allowed to help offset the price of a converter, which is expected to cost between $50 and $70 when it hits the market in 2008. Consumers may call **1 (888) 388-2009** (1-888-DTV-2009) between January 1, 2008, and March 31, 2009, to request coupons. Coupons will expire after 90 days.

Where can I buy a coupon-eligible converter?
Coupon-eligible converters will be available in stores and online where televisions and other consumer electronics products are purchased. The government will provide a list of eligible converters and participating retailers online and when coupons are mailed to consumers.

This information is provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Visit www.ntia.doc/gov/dtvcoupon *to learn more.*



Resolve To Read

Make reading a part of your New Year's resolutions! Start planning your NEA's Read Across America events or create a reading challenge or literacy project. Check out the new pledges, find tips and tools, and order your Read Across America Literacy Calendar and Toolkit at www.nea.org/readacross.

NEA'S READ ACROSS AMERICA DAY—MARCH 3, 2008

On the Web

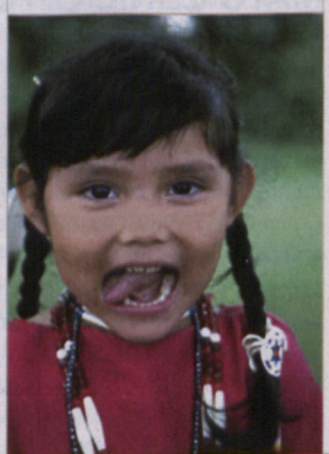
FREE DIGITAL WORKSHOPS FOR TEACHERS OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

The U.S. Department of Education's Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative, in collaboration with the Office of Indian Education, has announced the launch of "Digital Teacher Workshops for Teachers of Native American Students."

The workshops are designed to provide professional development opportunities for teachers of Native Americans and Alaska Natives in all grade levels and content areas.

The workshops support mastery of academic content and application by modeling strong teaching methods that have been successful in the classroom and by providing a classroom application component, as well as additional resources.

These free workshops are available on the Web at **www.t2tweb.us/nativeamerican**. The first workshops focus on literature, community outreach, and reading.



PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ROHAN BAUMANN; U.S. CENSUS BUREAU; LEN SPODEN

Diversity Calendar

JANUARY

JANUARY—NATIONAL MENTORING MONTH

Sponsored by the Harvard Mentoring Project, this observance encourages volunteer mentors to help young people from underprivileged backgrounds reach their full potential. For more information, visit www.mentoring.org/mentoring_month/.

JANUARY 1—EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION ANNIVERSARY

In 1863, President Lincoln signed this edict proclaiming that all slaves living within rebelling Confederate states "are, and henceforth shall be, free." Visit www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/.

JANUARY 1—ELLIS ISLAND OPENS

Beginning in 1892, this New York Harbor facility served as the gateway to the United States for more than 20 million people. Search passsenger arrival records and add your ancestors to the Ellis Island Wall of Honor at www.ellisisland.org.

JANUARY 1–3—JAPANESE NEW YEAR

Japan celebrates the 20th year of Emperor Akihito's reign. People decorate their entrances, wear ceremonial attire, visit shrines, and listen to temple bells ring 108 times.

JANUARY 7—CHRISTMAS DAY (ORTHODOX)

Kala Christouyenna! Following the Julian Calendar, Greek and Eastern Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas in January.

JANUARY 21—MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY/ DAY OF SERVICE

This day honors Reverend King's life and commitment to equality and unity. A recent addition to this federal holiday, the Day of Service encourages citizens to follow his words: "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve." For more, go to www.mlkday.org.

JANUARY 20—WORLD RELIGION DAY

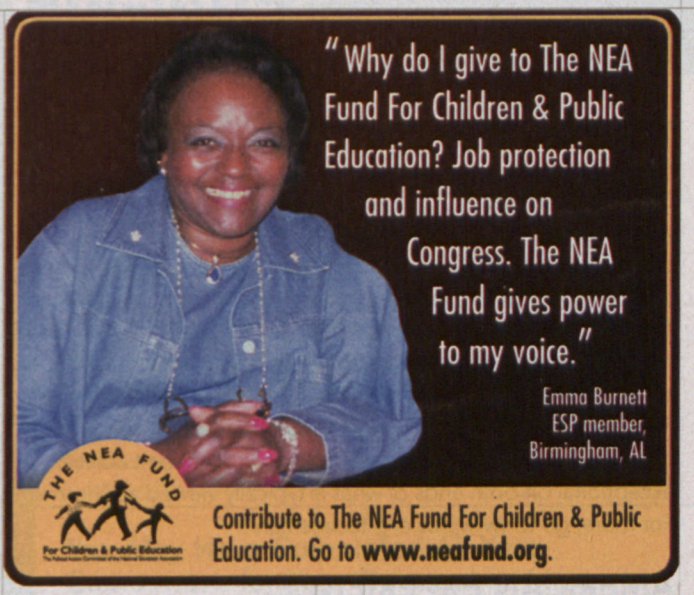
This day emphasizes that the religions of the world must strive for unity among humans. For more, go to www.worldreligionday.org.

JANUARY 21–25—NO NAME-CALLING WEEK

Words can be hurtful. This week is aimed at ending name-calling of all kinds and providing schools with tools and inspiration to launch dialogues about ways to eliminate bullying. Go to www.nonamecallingweek.org/.

JANUARY 23—FIRST NATIVE AMERICAN SENATOR

On this day in 1907, Charles Curtis, of Kaw, Osage, and Pottawatomie ancestry on his mother's side, was sworn in as the U.S. Senator from Kansas. From 1928–1933 he served the nation as Vice President with President Herbert Hoover.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Emma Burnett
ESP member,
Birmingham, AL
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VISIT A LOCAL H&R BLOCK OFFICE and receive $20 off standard tax preparation services and $40 off premium services.

Learn more at **www.neamb.com/taxcut07**.

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR ASSETS, AND SAVE ON LEGAL FEES

NEA MEMBER BENEFITS AND NOLO PRESS are excited to offer a great deal* on **Quicken WillMaker Plus 2008** estate planning software. For a limited time, NEA members can purchase the package for $27.90, including shipping (the Nolo Internet price is normally $49.99). A downloadable version is also available for $19.95.

Quicken WillMaker Plus provides legal forms to create a will, living trust, health care power of attorney, financial powers of attorney, and much more. Find out more, including legal limitations within and outside the United States: Go to **www.neamb.com**, click on Member Discounts, and select the **Nolo Quicken WillMaker Plus** offer.

*Note that this specially priced offer from Nolo does not qualify for the 5 percent discount given to NEA members on the Nolo Web Site.

On TV

TODAY'S MAN

PBS/Independent Lens, January 8, 10 p.m. ET. Check local listings.

What happens when a "little professor" grows up? In this very personal 60-minute documentary, Nicky Gottlieb demonstrates the challenges of becoming an adult with Asperger's Syndrome. A kind of autism—but without the language and cognitive impairments commonly associated with autism—Asperger's is often accompanied by amazing talents like those seen in the movie *Rain Man*. Nicky talks about what it's like to try and lead an independent life in this psychological paradox of different abilities, exceptional on both ends of what is typically viewed as "normal." For more, go to www.pbs.org/todaysman/.

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: OSWALD'S GHOST

PBS, January 14, 9 p.m. ET. Check local listings.

The assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy occurred long before today's students (and some teachers) were born, but are still critical to an understanding of current social and political events. This 90-minute film provides a look back and considers the toll taken on Americans' ability to trust media and government, and their idealism and optimism about the future. Go to www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/oswald/ for a teacher's guide.

MAPPING STEM CELL RESEARCH: TERRA INCOGNITA

PBS/Independent Lens, January 15, 10 p.m. ET. Check local listings.

One of the most controversial issues of our times, stem cell research gets a human face and an understandable explanation in this 90-minute film featuring Jack Kessler, a neurologist who became a stem cell researcher when his daughter suffered a paralyzing spinal injury. With help from bioethicist Laurie Zoloth, the film explores ethical and religious perspectives as well as the science and revolutionizing potential of stem cell medicine. Go to www.pbs.org/independentlens/stemcell for more information.

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: THE LOBOTOMIST

PBS, January 21, 9 p.m. ET. Check local listings.

Was Walter J. Freeman, M.D., a medical genius or a monster?

In this 60-minute film, director Barak Goodman asks viewers to consider: "At what point do interventions meant to alleviate suffering begin to conflict with essential human qualities?" A surgical procedure intended to help individuals with severe mental illnesses, the lobotomy was used by Freeman and others as a solution for overcrowded hospitals, bored housewives, and misbehaving children. For more information, go to www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/. ***Note:*** Due to subject matter and graphic images, this film is recommended for high school and college use only.

PASS THE PLATE

Disney Channel, Daily Interstitial.

In this new multicultural series designed to help kids and families understand more about nutrition, young stars from here and abroad show how healthy foods (e.g., apples, bananas, vegetables, etc.) are prepared and eaten around the world. Hosted by Brenda Song (from Disney Channel's *The Suite Life of Zack & Cody*), the short segments air daily in-between regular programming. As each recipe is showcased, it will be available at www.DisneyChannel.com/passtheplate.

KIDSNET, partnering with educators and the media for more than 25 years, provided these viewing suggestions. Visit www.kidsnet.org.

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

NO ENGLISH

By Jacqueline Jules

Imagine moving to a new country and speaking a different language. Blanca arrives in Mrs. Bertram's second-grade class, and from the start, there are misunderstandings. Blanca draws pictures while the other students do classwork and plays by herself at recess. Diane wants to be friends, but without words they can't communicate—until they start drawing pictures of what they want to say. Eventually Blanca begins to learn English, and Diane learns that "different" is not weird or strange—just different. Ages 4–8. 29 pp. $17.95 from Mitten Press. Visit www.mittenpress.com.

LESSONS IN AMERICAN MUSIC

By Deborah Kay Robinson Lindsay

An all-in-one resource for music teachers of grades 4–6, this book offers lesson plans, activities, sheet music, and assessments covering American composers William Billings, Stephen Foster, and Scott Joplin, and *The Star-Spangled Banner*. The multi-dimensional activities engage students in discussion, historical research, musical analysis, composition, transcription, choreography, and performance, offering children a myriad of ways to achieve success. Spiral bound, everything can be photocopied for class. 212 pp. $33 from R&L Education. Visit www.rowmaneducation.com.

PHOTOS TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: DALLAS POLICE DEPARTMENT/NATIONAL ARCHIVES; THE SATURDAY EVENING POST/GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

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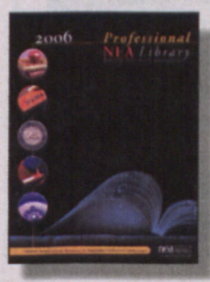

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Available for $59.99 at www.artsallianceamerica.com

TEACHING TOLERANCE

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www.teachingtolerance.org/newsletter

The NEA Commitment to Diversity in Leadership

In practice and in policy, the National Education Association has a history of supporting diversity in leadership. In 1964, NEA began eradicating racial segregation in its affiliates and staff and in 1966, the Association merged with the all-Black American Teachers Association. For many years, as part of the effort to integrate the Association, NEA policies guaranteed governance representation for ethnic minorities.

During the 1980s, the Association amended several policies to comply with the Landrum-Griffin Act, a federal statute that made it illegal to guarantee minority representation. In 1988 the NEA Representative Assembly adopted the following affirmative action policy regarding the Association presidency:

NEA Constitution, Article IV. Section 4. Affirmative Action Procedure

By December 1 of each membership year immediately preceding the next membership year in which a presidential election is to be held (i.e., approximately 18 months prior to the date of the election), appropriate information about the office of president and the electoral process, including all relevant timelines, shall be sent to each of the ethnic minority special interest groups identified in Bylaw 12; and

During the membership year in which the aforesaid presidential election is to be held, a copy of this section of the Constitution, with an appropriate explanation as to its background and intent, shall be included in (a) an Association publication sent to all members by December 1 and (b) the material that is sent to the delegates to that year's Representative Assembly.

If after any period of eleven (11) consecutive membership years a member of an ethnic minority group has not served as President, the Association shall take such steps as may be legally permissible to elect a member of an ethnic minority group.

During the debate at the 1988 Representative Assembly, John Wilson, a North Carolina delegate speaking in favor of the amendment, aptly summarized the intent of this policy:

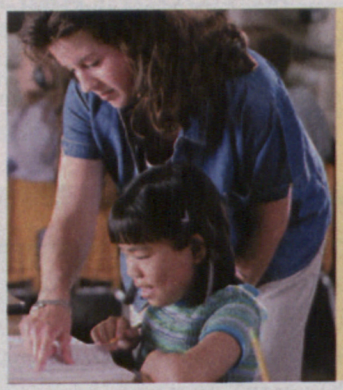
"Fellow delegates, last year we had to remove a part of our Constitution that guaranteed that at the end of 11 years if an ethnic minority were not elected President, that nominations would be limited to an ethnic minority... even though we had to eliminate that guarantee, we shouldn't eliminate our affirmative action commitment to assuring that our organization will reflect the diversity of our membership. It is an affirmative action amendment. It guarantees information, it guarantees accessibility, but it does not guarantee that anyone will be elected unless the delegates choose to do that."

In accordance with the above provision, this message serves as a reminder of the Association's continued commitment to diversity in leadership.

Discounted auto insurance for NEA members.

Shaping young minds has its rewards.

Join over 2,500 education professionals who switch to the *NEA Members Auto & Home Insurance Program* each month.



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AHNT0108

ANNOUNCEMENT TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS: POTENTIAL VACANCY

In accordance with the Campaign and Election Regulations for NEA Offices, the NEA Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules is announcing a potential vacancy in one of the NEA executive offices. If the current NEA Secretary-Treasurer is elected Vice President, a one-year vacancy to complete her unexpired term as Secretary-Treasurer would occur. This one-year term as Secretary-Treasurer would be filled by an election at the 2008 Representative Assembly.

Members wishing to run for this position must do so on a contingency basis—i.e., contingent on the position becoming vacant—since it is not yet known whether the vacancy will occur. Any member interested in running for this position must submit a completed filing form to NEA Governance and Policy Support **no later than April 15, 2008.** Members interested in running should contact Stephen Behrer of NEA Governance and Policy Support as soon as possible at **(202) 822-7923** or **sbehrer@nea.org** to obtain a candidate filing form and related information.

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TEACHING MAGIC

Dumbledore had it. Do you? BY DONNA HICKS

MANY TEACHERS LOVE the Harry Potter series because it can turn reluctant readers into book lovers. But another reason is that it is essentially the story of students and teachers and their relationships. It's about the teaching of magic, but it is our story, too. In the Harry Potter books, teachers and students work together to defeat evil—just like in real life.

When I took my daughter to see the fifth movie—on opening day, of course—the audience cheered when the power-hungry Professor Umbridge got what she deserved—she who was out to can as many teachers as she could. Some of the cheers were extra loud, and I think they may have come from other teachers in the audience—not just me.

Sure, Umbridge made Harry write, "I will not lie" with his own blood, but look what she did to teachers! Did J.K. Rowling delve into a teacher's worst nightmares the night before a scheduled observation to conjure up Umbridge's despicable behavior? Her irritating throat-clearing ("hem hem"), her interrupting questions, her clipboard writing, her total lack of understanding of best teaching practices—outrageous! She was the perfect villain both students and teachers could despise.

> "How about a spell to get students to understand a difficult concept? 'Comprendo!'"

The teaching world portrayed in the series does have some strange aspects, though. None of the teachers are married or have children. Is this a Hogwarts rule? They do have to live at the school, after all. Or was it just too complicated for the author to have a character be a teacher and a spouse and a parent? As a teacher, spouse, and parent myself, I agree it is complicated at times, but it's quite doable, even without magic.

Another oddity: Once a student graduates from Hogwarts, he or she can teach there the very next year. Apparently, no methods classes are required. Professional development is not really mentioned. Maybe they use magic to help them teach.

Speaking of which, I wonder if Hogwarts teachers use magic to grade papers. I would like to know that spell. "Gradomindus!" Hmm…it appears that my ruler doesn't really work well as a wand.

How about a spell to get kids to understand a difficult concept? "Comprendo!" That would be magical.

Hogwarts teachers do use magic for classroom management. They can add or subtract points from a group just by announcing it: "Five points for Gryffindor." It's the ultimate school-wide discipline plan.

That doesn't mean they don't have a few…glitches. In the fourth book, Mad-Eye Moody (or who we think is Mad-Eye Moody) turns Malfoy, a misbehaving student, into a ferret and makes the ferret bounce painfully up and down while Mad-Eye lectures him: "Never—do—that—again."

Professor McGonagall sees him and asks, "What—what are you doing?"

To which Mad-Eye answers simply, "Teaching."

It's one of the greatest lines of all the books—followed closely by McGonagall's reminder, "We never use Transfiguration as a punishment!" How often do you have to remind your colleagues of that?

Despite all their extra powers, Hogwarts teachers appear to be hardworking, yet under-appreciated. They stick up for one another and for their students. They keep teaching even under stressful circumstances. They have a deep love for the subjects they teach. Sound familiar? I guess the best of Hogwarts is the same as the best at muggle schools.

Teaching magic: If we're lucky, it's what we all have and want to keep throughout our own storied careers.

Donna Hicks is a literacy coach at Lookout Mountain Elementary School in Phoenix and has taught third through fifth grades for 19 years. She is also a freelance writer.

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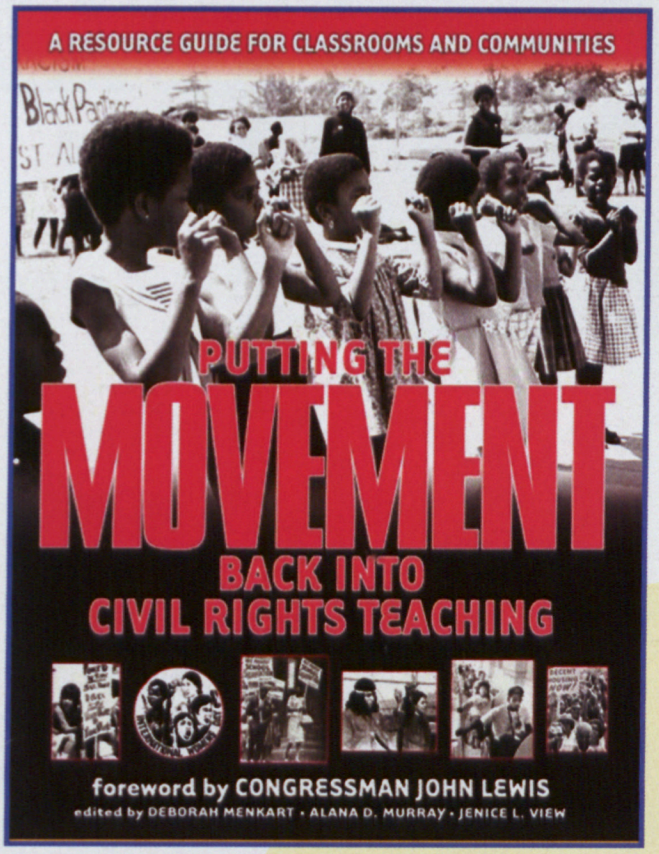
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